

GOD'S PLAN

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CREATION. There is only *one God* whom we are to serve (Exodus 20:2-5). He is the *God* that made the earth, the sun, moon, and the stars and hung them in space. He made the waters, the skies, animals and fishes and all vegetation that grows on the face of the earth. He climaxed His creation by making man and breathed into him the breath of life. Man therefore has become a living soul (Genesis 2:7). What a mighty Creator! We find the wonderful story of creation in the first chapter of Genesis.

God placed man in the Garden of Eden to keep it and dress it (Genesis 2:8). He had a *Plan* for him and his descendants. The Lord wanted Adam and Eve to *Love* and *Obe*y Him, to serve and worship Him as the only *True God*. He set before them the power of choice (Genesis 2:15-17). Disobedience would result in punishment. This they soon experienced, sad to say, when they did not heed God's Word and ate of the forbidden fruit. Part of their punishment was that they were driven out of the beautiful garden (Genesis 3:23-24).

WORSHIP. God instilled in men the desire, the urge to pay homage, to worship someone, and that someone was to be *God himself*. When Cain brought his bloodless offering before God, it was not acceptable because it was according to Cain's plan and not to the Lord's plan. Abel's offering proved acceptable for he brought a blood sacrifice typical of the sacrifice God would later offer upon the cross of Calvary. Abel's worship was one of *Faith* in the promised *Redeemer* (Genesis 3:15). Ever since the creation of the world the Lord has called men to serve and worship only Him. To worship idols or other gods was strictly forbidden (Exodus 20:3-5).

THE FLOOD. As time went on the people on the face of the earth became very wicked. The Lord through Noah called them to repentance, giving them one hundred and twenty years time. Had they turned from the error of their ways, He would have shown *Mercy* and *Forgiveness* (Genesis 6:8). But Noah's message went unheeded and only he and his family were saved when the Lord sent the mighty waters that engulfed the earth in a great flood. Noah had built an ark according to God's Word and we can see how his *Faith* and *Obedience* were the means of saving him (Genesis 7:1). The ark was typical of God's plan of salvation later given through His Son Jesus Christ. The story of the flood reveals to us God's *Love* and *Power* to *Save* those that are true to Him. Only those faithful to Him could enter the ark and be protected from the waters when God Himself shut them in (Genesis 7:16).

THE RAINBOW. After the flood the Lord made a covenant with Noah and his posterity that He will not destroy all flesh by a flood again. He put the beautiful rainbow in the sky, which we often see when it rains and reminds us of the promise (Genesis 9:11-15). He has been true and faithful to His Word and the earth has not again experienced such a calamity. But it will some day be destroyed by fire (2 Peter 3:7).

GOD'S CONCERN. The Lord always has a deep concern of His people. Since He had a *Plan* for them He

grieved whenever they turned away to serve and to worship man-made gods and idols. Many of the patriarchs of old were truly men of God. The story of Abraham reveals to us the Lord's promise to bless him and his kindred (Genesis 12:1-3). Abraham was a man of *Faith*. Other prophets rallied the Israelites, the people of God, to obedience and faithfulness to the Lord and His ways. At the time of Samuel we find where they forsook their idols and served the Lord only (1 Samuel 7:3-6).

THE LAW. When the Israelites were in severe bondage to the Egyptians, God called Moses to a life of service for Him. The people would need a leader and a lawgiver in the years ahead (Exodus 2:1-12). Surely without God's help Moses would not have been successful in leading them out of Egypt and toward the Promised Land - Canaan. High priests held the office of offering to the Lord blood sacrifices for the sin of the people (Exodus 29:11-14). These rituals were God's way of dealing with sin in those early ages. It was in God's plan that blood was required to rectify or atone for the sin of transgressors (Hebrews 9:7). These sacrifices all pointed to the more perfect and supreme *Sacrifice*, "the *blood* of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (John 1:7).

A MESSIAH PROMISED. Prophets of old predicted the coming of this Messiah, this Savior into the world. He would be born in Bethlehem. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be *ruler* in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). There would be a time of spiritual darkness and a light (Jesus) would spring forth. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined" (Isaiah 9:2).

This Savior would come as a child, be identified with the people, would grow to manhood and fulfill all Scriptures relating to Him. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). Yet He would be despised by many. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief ... Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted" (Isaiah 53:3-12). His coming would once and for all put an end to all ceremonial laws which in themselves were but a shadow of good things to come (Hebrews 10:1).

BIRTH OF JESUS. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Hebrews 1:1,2). Suddenly, after years of waiting, Jesus is born in Bethlehem just as foretold (Matthew 1:21). In a mighty chorus from heaven, angels herald His birth (Luke 2:13,14). Here was the One who would save the people from their sins

for this is what the name Jesus means (Matthew 1:21). It was a time of spiritual darkness. He soon went from place to place teaching how to live to inherit *Eternal Life*. He preached the greatest sermon ever taught to men (Matthew 5:6,7). He healed the sick, made the blind to see and raised the dead (Luke 4:39; 7:21; John 11:43,44). Miracles and wonders! But let us remember He was the Son of God. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting *life*" (John 3:16).

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. Here was the One of whom God said, This is my beloved Son: hear him" (Mark 9:7). Here was, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Here was the *Light* of the world (John 9:5). "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). Here was the *Ruler* of whom Isaiah spoke. The King of God's spiritual kingdom had arrived on the scene. Here was the *Christ* confessed by Peter, "And we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:69). Here was the One who said, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). To be born again means we experience a spiritual awakening. We experience forgiveness of sins and become alive to the *Way*, the *Will* of God. "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him" (John 4:23). We become new creatures as Paul says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away; behold all things are become new" (Corinthians 5:17). We receive of God the will, the desire to serve Him faithfully.

REPENTANCE. The time had come of which John the Baptist preached, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). The message of Jesus was much the same. The *Call* was to *Repent*, which means to be sorry for our sins, to turn about, leave our evil ways and follow Jesus. He wanted citizens for His spiritual kingdom. The old system of laws and burnt offerings for sin had served its purpose. "And being made perfect, he became the *author of eternal salvation* unto all who *obey him*" (Hebrews 5:9).

HIS INVITATION. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:28,29). This was the loving invitation of Jesus, the Savior. This was the burden of His teachings. Here is the promise for transgressors to enjoy *Peace and Rest* for their souls if they come to Him. The acceptance of Jesus into our hearts, serving Him obediently makes us citizens of His kingdom. To be living faithfully within the kingdom assures us entrance into the pearly gates of heaven on the Day of Judgment. We will be saved like Noah was saved in the ark when the great flood came (Matthew 25:34).

THE CRUCIFIXION. Hear further the story of redemption: Wicked men took Jesus and nailed Him to the cross to die. His friends put His body in the grave. Guards were set to watch that He would not be stolen, that men could say He

is risen from the dead (Matthew 27:65,66). For Jesus had said if they destroyed Him He would rise again the third day (John 2:19-21). Into fulfillment came what the prophet Isaiah had foretold (Isaiah 53). Here on the cruel cross of Calvary Jesus suffered and died a shameful death that we may be saved (Matthew 27:50). We were the guilty ones. We were all doomed to die because of the disobedience of one (Adam) (Romans 5:18). Jesus took the punishment for our sins. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

THE RESURRECTION. Wonder of wonders! There was a great earthquake. An angel of the Lord rolled away the stone. Jesus was *Alive*. He had *Risen*! The keepers of the grave had become as dead men (Matthew 28:4). Before His death He had said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (That is, have eternal life) (John 11:25). God's great plan of Salvation had been perfected. The grave could not hold Him. The apostle Paul teaches, "Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20). "Marvel not at this: [Jesus says] for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28,29).

COME TODAY. When you feel restless and uneasy, when a still small voice seems to say you have done wrong, when you cannot sleep, when you are afraid to die, when you are serving other gods or idols - *Jesus* is *Calling* you to come to Him. Acknowledge yourself a sinner before God and *Today Accept the Lord Jesus*. He will give you *Peace, Rest, and Contentment* for your never-dying soul (Matthew 11:28-30). Say with Joshua of old, "but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

THE JUDGMENT. When the angels of God sound the mighty trumpet in the skies and Christ comes again to judge everyone, you will be glad you came to Jesus to serve Him on earth. You will be glad you are one of His to *Praise His Holy Name in all Eternity!*

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