

## God's Eternal Plan

God made mankind from the dust of the earth (**Genesis 1:26 & 27**). He made mankind in His own image... meaning we have been made in the spiritual likeness of God with all of the personality traits He possesses. He put man in a perfect place with a perfect climate, perfect food and perfect food sources. Everything was absolutely perfect including man's relationship with God. God came down and talked every afternoon with Adam and Eve and walked with them through the perfect creation He had made.

God gave man a set of very simple command to follow, three were positive commands; **"be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it"** (**Genesis 1:28**); He put man in the Garden of Eden and told him to **"work it and keep it"** (**Genesis 2:15**), and **"You may surely eat of every tree of the garden"** (**Genesis 2:16**). One however was a negative command, **"...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"** (**Genesis 2:17**). And that was it... that was all mankind had to do in the perfect place that God had for him. Man was the crowning achievement of God's creation, the last thing that God made and everything was perfect in God's sight. Sin and wrong did not exist in the world.

In the whole of **Genesis 3**, we see that mankind being mankind, had trouble with that one negative command that God had given them and thus the fall of mankind into a sinful state is chronicled. Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan in the garden to eat of the tree that they had been forbidden to eat of, and they fell for it. Eve was deceived and beguiled, Adam sinned with his eyes completely open, and knowingly disobeyed the command. God held them accountable for their transgression of His simple law and cast them out of the garden. But in one verse in the chapter God reveals the first inkling of His plan... in **Genesis 3:15** God says this to Satan **"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."** This is the first prophecy in the Bible about the coming of Christ and the whole rest of the Bible is all about God's plan for Christ to come and redeem mankind from sin, the golden thread that binds the whole book together.

All in all, there are over 300 Old Testament prophecies about the coming of Christ, and in the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John at the beginning of the New Testament we see *every one* of them being fulfilled. Only God could do such a thing with that kind of perfect accuracy and chronicle it for us to be able to see it for ourselves through the inspired writings of over 40 authors, through 66 separate books over a 1600 year span. From the writings of Moses around 1500 B.C., to the last of the books done around 95 A.D., God has provided for us a guide as to who He is, who His Son is and what He wants for us... His fallen creatures. In this writing I am going to outline the plan that God has made for us and so eloquently executed on throughout the millennia since Adam and Eve.

One thing I do want to touch on is this; the importance of reading the Bible and of understanding it carries eternal consequences. God through Christ has promised those who obey Him eternal life in heaven with Him after their time on the earth. That message is found in the Bible and nowhere else. Those who choose to ignore the message do so at their own eternal peril. Eternity is a huge concept for those of us living now and frankly it always has been so. Eternity, infinity, these concepts seem to boggle our minds. How can those of us who have only lived our own finite existence understand a concept with no beginning and no end? Really we cannot, we can know it intellectually, but we cannot relate to it other than that. God can. He has no beginning and no end, and the concept is personal for us, in that we have a beginning, but we will have no end. Think on that! The difference between us and God on this is that we are immortal spiritually, but He is eternal. So where we spend eternity should be of great interest to us, because you may live to be 100 here on the earth, but your spirit will never die. Our eternal residence should be one of great interest to us. Eternity in Heaven or Hell is really our choice and no one else will make it for us.

We see in **Genesis 3** that sin caused God to cast mankind out of the Garden... sin separated us from God and we are told this in **Isaiah 59:1 and 2** where the prophet says this; **“Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.”** God is holy, and He cannot abide sin in any way. Due to this fact He has made a way for us to be forgiven of our sins through His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus is the sole focus of the plan to redeem mankind from sin and the goal with this writing is to help the reader to understand the role that Christ plays in salvation and the responsibilities placed on us as well.

First of all, we have to realize that all of us have sinned. Sin is the transgression of the commands that God has given us to live our lives by. That is another reason it is so important to read the Bible and know what it say for our daily lives. How can we live the way God expects us to, if we have not read His word and know the parameters He has laid down for us? Jesus said **“The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment--what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.”** (**John 12:48-50**) The word of God will be the means of our judgment, we will be judged by the words written there... all of them, when Christ returns the second time. To not know what it is says is tragic, especially when we have had the chance to read it. There will be no excuses on that day.

All of us have sinned. **Romans 3:23** says **“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”**. So God tells us through the words of Paul that none of us is without sin. However, we are not born sinful. If sin is the transgressing of God's stated commands, then how could an infant or a child commit a sin? They cannot know what the Bible says and then be able to

process it with adult level thought processes. That takes years of growth towards adulthood to be able to do that. So God does not deem children to be sinful, only those capable of making the decision to sin and of understanding the consequences are held accountable. We are each accountable for our own sins; they are ours alone, our children are not accountable for them. **Ezekiel 18:4** says this; “**Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die.**” We are each accountable for ourselves and no one else. The father is not accountable for the son’s sins and the son is not accountable for the father’s. In this way, sin is our very own personal problem.

Because the problem of sin is so pervasive in that it affects all of us, we needed a way to have our sins to be forgiven, wiped clean. In this way the relationship with God that we once had can be restored to us. But we do not have the ability to do this for ourselves, as this requires a perfect sacrifice from us to atone for our sins. None of us is perfect, all of us have sinned, so God had to intervene to give us a path way back that we could recognize and take advantage of.

That pathway is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We needed a savior and Jesus came to fill that role for us, to provide that badly needed sacrifice in order to atone for all of our sins. In **Matthew 1:21** we are told this when the angel telling Joseph said this, “...**you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.**” Jesus came to accomplish that for us since we could not do it ourselves. Jesus said in **Luke 19:10**, “**For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost**”. So He stated His mission clearly for us, to seek us out and to save us. He left the glories and unspeakable grandeur of heaven to come to the earth, to be born just like we are and to teach us the pathway to salvation, to be the bridge between us and the God who made us. Only He was uniquely qualified to do this as He is the Son of God, but is also the Son of Man.

When He came to the earth, He was called “**Immanuel**” literally meaning “**God with us**” (**Matthew 1:23**), but He was born just like we are so He was also able to be called “**the Son of Man**”. This qualified Him in a way that no one else could be qualified for the work that He was to do and still is doing now. His compassion and His love for us are beyond measure as demonstrated by His actions.

Those actions were culminated in the work that Christ did on the cross. It was there that He completed the work for God the Father that was planned for Him before the foundation of the world (**1 Peter 1:18-21**). On the cross He became “**the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world**” as John the Baptist called Him in **John 1:29**. He shed His blood that we might be cleansed from our sins by *His* purity and *His* righteousness. He died to show us that death had no power over Him, rising from the grave on the third day after His decease. Through the shedding of His blood, His death and His resurrection, we can know that He can do this for us too. We must put our faith in Him as our savior and claim His righteousness for ourselves. We do this by putting on Christ, being put into Christ, and being clothed with Christ. But how is that done?

In **John 14:6** Jesus said **“I am the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me.”** Jesus is the gateway for our reconciliation back to God; He is our door back to God and He even calls himself that in **John 10:9**. But how do we **“go through”** Him? In order to access the salvation that Jesus died on the cross to give to us we have to do two things; first we have to have faith in Him and in what He did for us on the cross as the Son of God and the Son of Man. Next we need to be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of our sins and that is where we go through the “door”. Faith gets you to the door’s threshold and baptism takes you across the threshold and into Christ. Now faith is built in Christ by studying what the Bible says about Him. We know this from **Romans 10:17** which says **“faith comes through hearing and hearing through the word of God”**. Our **“hearing”** of God’s word produces faith in us. Once we have that faith in God and Christ, we then take the next step which is obeying the commands that God has given us in order to go through Christ and be reconciled to God the Father. We put Christ on in baptism (which is the full immersion of the body in water – see the Greek word **“baptizo”** for the exact meaning) **Galatians 3:26 and 27** says this; **“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”** Our faith is actualized in our baptism. Baptism also washes away all of our sins (**Acts 2:38** and **Acts 22:16**) and we are added to Christ’s body which is the also the church (**Acts 2:47, Ephesians 5:23, Colossians 1:24, Romans 6:3 and 4**). The scriptures show this was only done to adults subjects; children were considered to be sinless and did not need to do this to be in a state of grace with God.

Jesus said in **Matthew 16:18** that He came here to establish His church. When we are joined with Christ in baptism, we become a part of His body which is His church and that happens right as our baptism takes place. God does all these things for us at the moment of our baptism; He takes away all of our sins, puts us into Christ, and adds us to the church. And that is how the reconciliation takes place!! We put on Christ in baptism, and Paul tells us in **Colossians 3:3** that our lives become hidden with Christ in God. Spiritually we become a part of Christ, and this is what saves us... God then sees Jesus when He looks at us; He does not see us with any of the sins that we have committed anymore. That is why it is so important to be baptized into Christ. It is the place where we become saved (**1 Peter 3:21**). Until we are put into Christ we are not saved, upon our baptism we enter the state of salvation that Jesus worked so hard to give to us when He died for our sins. On the cross Jesus paid the price for the possession of our spirits with His blood (**Acts 20:28**), in baptism we are spiritually washed clean by His blood (**Revelation 1:5**) and our names are then written in the Book of Life (**Revelation 20:15**) with His blood as the ink for the writing.

As you can see from all of this many things happen spiritually when we are baptized, and in the New Testament anyone who called themselves a **“christian”** was baptized just as we have seen from the scriptures mentioned here. Biblically there is no such thing as an unbaptized christian, and in the first century when the apostles were still teaching everyone understood that simple fact.

Unfortunately many in the religious world today say that baptism is not necessary. The Bible does not agree with that line of thinking in the least. Jesus said this in **Mark 16:16**, “**Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.**” So it really is that simple... once you are baptized for the forgiveness of your sins, you are added to Christ, clothed with Christ, hidden with Christ and placed in the church that He established... all at once. So to sum it up simply that is *how* we “**go through**” Jesus and how we access the salvation He offers to all of us.

Baptism is the beginning of our walk as christians, the first few steps of journey. After our baptism there are still things we need to do to stay in Christ. In **Acts 2:42** this was said of the first Christians “**And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers**”. We need to do that too. Christ’s apostles taught the first christians what to do and how to please God. All of this is found in the New Testament. They taught that we need to continually study God’s word (**Acts 17:11**) to know how to live, and what God expects of us and how to worship Him. All of the examples we will ever need are in the Scriptures. The examples of what the early christians did to do these things are easy to find and understand. Many of these examples are found in the book of Acts. From these we can know for example how the early christians worshipped; that they met on the first day of the week (**Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2**), they sang hymns to God (**Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16**), they prayed (**Acts 2:42**), they set aside an offering of their money to collect for God’s work (**1 Corinthians 16: 1 and 2**), they read they Scriptures and had lessons (**Acts 2:42, Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 14:26**), and they took the Lord’s Supper every first day of the week (**Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 11:23-34**). They did these things because the apostles instructed them that this was HOW they were to worship God. In order to be christians just like they were, there is nothing more we need to do and nothing less as well. Jesus said in **Revelation 20:7**, “**Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life**”. Living the christian life builds our faith to even stronger levels making us more useful to God as His servants, allows us to glorify Him more (which is why we were created in the first place, for God’s glory... **Isaiah 43:7**) and bringing us closer to Him as His beloved children (**1 John 3:1**). Eternity in heaven with God and Christ is our reward, where there are no tears, no pain, no sorrow, only perfection and eternal happiness and love. What a wonderful plan God has made for us!!!