

GOD'S GLORIOUS PLAN

By Tom Dockery

INTRODUCTION

Our world is fascinated by well-developed solutions to difficult problems. We are thrilled when medical science uncovers the solution to a disease that has plagued men for centuries. Mankind is constantly challenged and inspired as he reaches out for the solutions to our world's problems.

The most thrilling story ever told has to do with God's scheme for redeeming lost men. It encompasses centuries of preparation, and its end is one of unimaginable joy and satisfaction. "*God's Glorious Plan*" needs to be proclaimed around the world today. Let us notice the way in which God met the problem of the ages and provided a solution.

THE PLAN PURPOSED

It is needed...

When sin came into the world, the need for a plan of salvation became obvious. The wages of sin is death (*Romans 6.23*). The cry of Jeremiah voices the need of ill men when he says, "*Is there no balm in Gilead?*" (*Jeremiah 8.22*). Paul, in the New Testament, cried out for all men of sin, "*What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?*" (*Romans 7.24*).

It is promised...

No sooner had sin entered into the world, than God gave the seed of a promise of salvation (*Genesis 3.15*). The serpent would be crushed at the expense of the Seed of woman.

Thus was set into motion a mystery that men in every age desired to see fulfilled (*Romans 16.25-26; Ephesians 1.9-10; 3.3ff*). The promise was renewed to the patriarchs and the prophets.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all were promised a blessing (*Genesis 12.2-3; 26.4; 28.14*). The prophets gave exciting glimpses into the promise (*Cf. Isaiah 2.2-4*).

The promise is set in motion...

God chose a family because of the faith of Abraham. This family was nurtured and taught by God Himself. The story of the providential working of God with the family of Abraham is phenomenal. Finally, the Lord chose an entire nation through whom He could reveal His plan. God blessed this nation and gave them a land and a law. In spite of this, most of them forgot the Lord and His promise to them.

THE PLAN FORESHADOWED

God's Plan was foreshadowed by the nation...

It was a nation of people set apart. God expected His people to be different from the pagan nations around them. They were not to ally themselves in any way with others that would compromise their relationship with God (*Cf. 2 Corinthians 6.14-18*). It was a nation that was to reflect to the world something about God and be an example to others.

God's Plan was foreshadowed by the temple...

The temple made men aware of the need of sacrifice and a high priest. It also made them aware that one does not approach God irreverently or disregard His commands. The temple made men aware that man was separated from God by a veil.

God's Plan was foreshadowed by the prophets...

God's Plan is pictured as a kingdom by Daniel (*Daniel 2*). It is pictured as a flock of sheep and a wonderful temple by Ezekiel (*Ezekiel 34, 40-48*).

THE PLAN IS COMPLETED

The timing was perfect...

(*Romans 5.6; Galatians 4.4*) It was a time of stability and order maintained by the Roman Government. All parts of the world were open to travel and trade. A universal system of coinage was in effect. (*Matthew 22.19-21*). Roman citizens were given special privileges. (*Acts 16.37-39; 22.25-29*). It was a time of peace. There was a nucleus for the church in the Jewish people, who had been scattered into all parts of the world. (*Acts 2.3-11*). Wherever they went, they publicized the concept of One True God. There was one universal language. Men were ready for Christianity because they were in a state of helplessness. (*Romans 5.6*). The religions of the world were bankrupt.

The teaching was perfect...

The teaching was with authority. (*Matthew 7.29*). It was simple and to the point. It furnished the guidance that was needed. (*2 Timothy 3.16-17*).

The result was perfect...

Jesus fulfilled all of God's plans. (*Matthew 5.17-18*). He came to do the will of God (*John 6.28*), and on the cross He proclaimed, "It is finished." (*John 19.30*). The mystery was revealed (*Romans 16.26; Ephesians 3.9-10*), and the throne of God was made accessible to all men through Christ.

THE PLAN IS REVEALED

The church was the culmination of God's plans.

It revealed the wisdom of God. (*Ephesians 3.10*). It is the pillar and ground of truth. (*1 Timothy 3.15*).

The establishment of the church was the fulfillment of prophecy.

1. It was established at the time predicted by the prophets. (*Daniel 2.44*)
2. It was established in the place predicted by the prophets. (*Acts 2.5; Isaiah 23*)
3. It was established in the manner predicted by the prophets: With the outpouring of the Spirit (*Acts 2.41*); With the preaching of Peter and the apostles (*Matthew 16.18; Acts 2.14*); With the obedience of penitent believers (*Acts 2.41*).
4. It was composed of the people predicted by the prophets. (*Isaiah 2.2*). It was called the "ekklesia" or the "called out, assembly, or assembled multitude." (*Colossians 1.13*). It was composed of those who "were being saved." (*Acts 2.47*).

Characteristics of the primitive church.

1. Its terms of membership: Faith, Repentance, Baptism. (*Acts 2.38; 3:19; 8:37*).
2. Its organization and government: Apostles, elders, deacons, evangelists, teachers. (*Ephesians 5.19; James 5.13; 1 Corinthians 16.2; Acts 20.7*).
3. Its fundamental doctrine: Jesus Christ and His death, burial, and resurrection. (*Acts 2.22-36*)
4. Its work: Develop its members spiritually, provide for the needy, and evangelize the lost world.

CONCLUSION

"God's Glorious Plan" is the only hope of salvation for lost men. A prominent doctrine of modern times is that the church is unimportant, but the Lord intended that it be the greatest body of people on earth. It was prophesied many centuries in advance. It was in preparation for thousands of years, and John was finally sent to prepare the way. Christ promised to build it (*Matthew 16.18*), and He spent three of the hardest years that man could experience on earth preparing for it. He even purchased it with His blood. (*Acts 20.28*).

Don't you want to take advantage of God's plan and tell the world about it?