

Week (3) DISCOVERING GOD'S PLAN
God's plan proves His matchless grace.

Day 11: Creation and Mankind's Failure

Scripture Reading: Genesis 2:4-17

Insight: This passage contains the Biblical fact that God created the entirety of the universe around us. The amazing process and uniqueness of life are everywhere and point to an all-powerful Creator. The climax of the Creation was man. God breathed the breath of life and created man alone in His image. The environment at the time of God's Creation of the universe was a perfect paradise. Animals lived together peacefully, natural resources emerged in abundance, and plant-life weeded and watered itself (what more needs to be said?). This paradise was the world experienced only by Adam, the first man, and Eve, the first woman. God created humankind to glorify Him, but mere human puppets would not bring Him glory. God required a choice—would humanity choose to please God or satisfy self? With Satan's urging, Adam and Eve disobeyed God; a decision that would invite the devastating effects of sin for themselves and all of humanity—death. God was gracious in creating man and allowing man a choice.

Reflection:

What in the universe points to an all-powerful Creator?

How do you picture Adam and Eve's day-to-day existence?

Why did God provide a choice for humankind?

What did God promise would be the result of their decision?

Principle: God's grace is evident in the creation of humanity.



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Day 2: God's Law

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 30:11-20

Insight: Humankind failed the test God gave them in the Garden of Eden, and sin reigned. God was forced to send a worldwide Flood to destroy the wicked with the exception of Noah's righteous family. Yet, sin immediately controlled humanity once again. Mankind had an inherent and irreversible problem: **sin**. God is the source of life and He offered life at Creation but sin had brought death. After the time of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their offspring), the nation God promised to Abraham (Israel) was led out of Egyptian bondage by Moses. As they traveled to the land that would become the tangible evidence of God's promise, God graciously provided His people with explicit commandments on how to please Him. God's grace is further seen in a system that required a blood sacrifice (strictly animal) to grant forgiveness for failure to keep the commandments. God says in today's passage, "My commands are clear. Love me and obey my commandments so you can live and enjoy blessing, or disobey me and reap sin's consequences—cursing and death."

Reflection:

How would we know what pleases God and what is sin if He hadn't told us?

What is similar between the choice in today's reading and yesterday's reading?

Was God under obligation to provide a solution for sin's consequences?

How would you summarize God's offer?

Principle: God's grace is evident in providing a remedy for mankind's failure.



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Day 13: The Prophets

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 31:27-34

Insight: This passage presents a message from the prophet Jeremiah. Before the time of Jesus Christ, prophets were essentially the mouth of God. God would speak directly through the prophets to His people, instructing them how to properly please Him. The prophets' message often presented a choice of judgment or blessing based on the people's obedience to God's direction. The message of prophecy often applied to their immediate situation, yet anticipated complete fulfillment with the coming of Jesus Christ. This passage uses graphic word pictures common to their culture and describes God's judgment on His people for their failure to keep His commands. God emphasizes through the prophet that His people are not capable of keeping the laws that reflect His character. This message of hopelessness was necessary to fully appreciate the message of future hope when conformity to external laws would be rendered unnecessary by the Messiah's establishment of a new covenant relationship.

Reflection:

Was God obligated to reveal His desires to humankind?

Why was it necessary for mankind to realize their inability to please God?

Was mankind's inability to obey God surprising?

How did the message of future hope affect the immediate audience?

Principle: God's grace is evident in providing hope despite mankind's inability.



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Day 14: Jesus Christ the Messiah

Scripture Reading: Galatians 4:1-7

Insight: The word Messiah means “Anointed One” and is used in the Bible to point to God’s Promised Deliverer. The Messiah was foretold by the prophets and desperately needed by humankind. This passage explains that God used the period of time before the coming of the Messiah to teach His people necessary truths about Himself and uncomfoting truths about themselves. At the perfect time, God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to earth in the form of created man. God determined that everything was ready to present the ultimate gift to humanity—the fulfillment of the promise of Messiah. Jesus Christ released humanity from bondage under the law and offered freedom in the family of God. All of humanity throughout all time can spend eternity with God based solely on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Mankind’s hopeless situation is remedied by the amazing offer of God’s grace through the coming of Jesus Christ. Despite our failures, God offers us the chance to be His children and heirs of His promises.

Reflection:

How does this passage relate to yesterday’s prophecy of a new covenant?

What characterizes the developmental period of a child?

Why did God send His Son when He did?

What does the passage indicate is the result of receiving the gift of Jesus Christ?

Principle: God’s grace culminates in the offering of Jesus Christ.



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Day 15: The New Covenant

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:36-47

Insight: This amazing event takes place immediately after Christ's departure from this earth. He lived a sinless life and influenced thousands with His ministry and teachings. He fulfilled every prophecy of God's promised Messiah, yet He was crucified by the hands of those He had come to rescue. Jesus Christ was buried in a tomb and on the third was resurrected to be seen by many of His followers. Now, however, His followers were sobered by His departure and expectant of Christ's promise of His Spirit. The Spirit of God did come upon Christ's believers and they told others of their need to believe in Jesus Christ. The choice was simple: believe in Jesus Christ for eternal life in Heaven or ignore Jesus Christ and experience eternal death in Hell. Many believed and joined together to form the church, often pictured as the body of Christ. Jesus Christ fulfilled the demands of the Old Covenant under the Law and instituted the gift of the New Covenant under His blood, which is available to all.

Reflection:

What qualified Jesus Christ to institute the New Covenant?

Why was Jesus Christ crucified?

What made the listeners in the reading ask what they should do?

How does the truth of Jesus Christ affect individuals?

Principle: God's grace is extended to all people.



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Additional Study

God's Creation of Humankind: Genesis 2:1-3

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Sin Enters Human Race: Genesis 3:6-8

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The Flood Caused by Sin: Genesis 6:11-13

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God Initiates the Patriarchs: Genesis 12:1-4

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Requirements of God's Law are Instituted: Deuteronomy 6:4-5, 17-18

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Prophets Foretold the Coming Messiah: Isaiah 9:6-7

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Jesus Christ Sacrificed Himself for the Salvation of Humankind: Romans 5:8-10

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Jesus Christ Established the Church to Carry on His Work: Acts 1:8

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Jesus Christ Will Return to Earth to Take His Believers: I Thessalonians 4:16-18

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Personal Journal

Does God allow any amount of sin in His presence?

How much sin occurred before Adam's relationship with God was broken?

Have I ever sinned?

How do I compare with God's demands for living?

What effect does the sacrifice of Jesus Christ have on me?

Does God's grace in helping humankind ever run out?

"THE GRACE OF GOD HAS APPEARED BRINGING SALVATION FOR ALL"

