

# *His Eternal Plan*

Becoming A New Testament Christian

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## **Introduction**

The purpose of this guide is to help a truth seeker understand the good news of God's love. It is a tool that can be utilized alongside the video series "Becoming a New Testament Christian," offered by Sunset International Bible Institute in Lubbock, Texas.

Feel free to use this material in any way that will help more people to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. May God richly bless you in all ways.

## **About the Author**

Jerry Tallman has spent the last 30 years preaching Christ and sharing the Gospel message in thousands of personal Bible studies. Now he's conducting evangelism workshops, nationwide, on a full-time basis. Jerry developed the effective method found in this book for those who are searching for the truth about Christianity. Consider these truths concerning yourself and share this information with others.

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# Foundation for Christianity

## Lesson One

### Introduction

Welcome and thank you for your interest in a study of this most important subject. As seekers of truth, we must begin with some basic facts, and then we will look at the Bible for an understanding of God's plan and love for you. Be prepared to write down questions that you may have. Search, study, and inquire as a truth seeker for the answers to your questions. We will start with this basic question, "What is Christianity all about?"

There is some confusion about this question because many different varieties of people with different beliefs call themselves Christians. Christians are people who have faith in Christ Jesus. They are followers or disciples of Jesus Christ and His teaching. I would like for us to think about the fact that Christianity rests upon a foundation made up of three major pillars. The first pillar is the fact that there is a God. There is a creator of this universe, one who sustains our lives. He will be our future judge someday. The second pillar of Christianity is the fact that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. It is not something written by man. Man held the pen, but God inspired or moved the men in what they wrote. The third pillar is the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Christians really hold firm to the belief that there is a God, that the Bible is His Word, and that Jesus Christ is His Son. We will now look at these three pillars in more detail.

### The First Pillar: The Existence of God

The first pillar on which Christianity rests is proof of the existence of God. What does the Bible say?

#### Romans 1:20-23

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the

glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

What does this text say to you?

Three facts are found in this text.

1. The world itself is evidence enough for us to know that there is a designer of this universe and that He deserves our praise and thanks.
2. The text says that man has foolishly created objects of worship that look like things that were created rather than worshiping the creator.
3. It is human nature to seek after something greater than ourselves, something or someone to put our trust in and to worship.

Let's read Romans 1:20 again: "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

Think about this text. We can know that there is a God. There is evidence in creation all around us. Whether we are looking at God's creation through a telescope or microscope, we see evidence of His existence in the order that is there. We exist in an ordered galaxy in a great universe. If we look through a microscope at the smallest life form, we find order. Evidence for the existence of God is within our own bodies where all kinds of systems work in great order. Our digestive, respiratory, circulatory, and nervous systems all work together to bring about a healthy body. Reproduction in the way God planned it is beautiful. It cannot happen by chance.

To illustrate that there is an intelligent creator, think about a watch. You may have never been to the country where the watch was made, and you may have never seen the company or the watchmakers that produced it. Yet this intricate timepiece is evidence that they all exist.

What about the teaching of evolution? Is it fact or theory?

A lot of confusion is caused by evolution. It is a theory, but it is taught as a fact. However, if you ask the people who believe in evolution about the origin of life, they talk about a mass of matter that was moving through the universe years ago. It exploded, they would say, and pieces went in all directions developing into different galaxies. But where did this matter come from? There is no answer. But evolutionists base their whole system of understanding on this theory.

I would like for us to stop and think about this, the idea of something coming from nothing. There is no evidence that something can come from nothing. The Bible gives us an answer. God is the creator. He is the one who brought about this matter. He is the one who created not only this planet, but also the universe. The evolutionary theory says we are the result of a series of accidents, but the order in the universe and our bodies clearly say that this cannot be true.

Consider this definition of an accident. If a rock or huge boulder were rolling down the side of a mountain with no direction of its own, it would not be blamed for any damage it caused. That is an accident. What we have in this universe is not an accident. We live in a planned, ordered universe.

The fossil record leaves no evidence of drastic change from one kind of group to another or one species to another. That makes for huge gaps in the fossil record and thus in the theory of evolution itself. It is illogical for evolutionists to present their theory as fact, but unfortunately they often do.

We live in a universe with many galaxies, too many to count. Our Milky Way Galaxy is just one of them and our planet earth is just one planet in this vast galaxy. Earth has just the right atmosphere to support life. Our planet is just the right distance from the sun, tipped at just the right angle, and orbiting at just the right speed. This is not a result of chance. To attribute the factors that support life to chance or accident takes more faith than to believe in a creator that we have not seen.

Think back to the watch for further illustration. If we accept that the parts of the watch exist and that a jar exists, consider putting the parts of the watch in the jar and shaking that jar for millions of years.

The chance that they would fall into the order of this intricate timepiece is mathematically impossible. It would take more faith to believe this is possible than to believe in a watchmaker I cannot see.

If you have any doubts about the existence of God, do not let those questions go unanswered. Be a truth seeker. Many resources are available to aid you in your search. Ask the person who encouraged you to read this material or the authors of this material for additional tools.

## **The Second Pillar: The Bible is the Word of God**

Christians understand that God inspired the Bible. Evidence within the Bible helps us understand this fact. First, the Bible is made up of a library of sixty-six books, written by more than forty different people over a span of 1400 years. It was impossible for the writers to get together and compare their notes. They lived at different times and in different places. Yet, they tell different parts of one story.

Suppose we have sixty-six people in sixty-six different places following instructions on how to carve out the pieces to a puzzle. At some point all of those pieces of the puzzle are brought to one place and they fit together perfectly. It would be evidence that the wood workers had a common source of information. The Bible is like that. The Bible contains sixty-six books that tell one story. It is the unfolding drama of God's redemptive plan from creation to the present time and through eternity. This continuing story provides evidence that these sixty-six books are inspired, just as the writers of the information claim.

Some might ask, "Is the Bible historically accurate?" Historians around the world, modern as well as ancient, agree that the Bible is historically accurate. Archeologists even use the Bible to locate lost cities and to know what they are looking for.

The Bible is the writing of theology, God revealing himself and his plan for us. In most major purchases, an owner's manual comes along with the item. That is what God's Word is for us. The Bible reveals how God loves us. The Bible shows how we can live life

abundantly. No one could have invented this information because the Bible gives us timeless truths.

### **Inspiration of Scripture**

Let's go back and look some more into the idea of inspiration. What does the Bible say?

#### **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Would you agree that Paul is saying that men held the pen to write the scriptures, but God breathed His message into them?

#### *Teaching*

Notice that the text says the scriptures are useful for teaching. Picture a path upon which you are walking. God's Word teaches us the way that He would have us walk in order to spend eternity with Him.

#### *Rebuking*

The Word tells us when we have stepped off the path and rebukes us for our incorrect actions that make us wander from Him.

#### *Correcting*

God's Word tells us how to get back on the path and be reunited with Him.

#### *Training in Righteousness*

God tells us how to stay in fellowship with Him, how to continue on that path and spend eternity with Him. Paul says the information is complete and able to equip us for every good work.

#### **2 Peter 1:3**

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.



Peter writes that God has supplied everything we need to live a godly life. It is all found in His Word. Let me illustrate. If I promise to build you your dream house completely with no cost to you, would you need to go out and buy windows or shingles? You would not have to if I keep my promise. Peter says that God supplied everything we need in order to know how to live a godly life.

## **2 Peter 1:20-21**

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Again Peter says that men held the pen, but God gave them the message.

## **Galatians 1:8-9, 11-12**

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned...I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

We don't need to search for information other than what the Scriptures tell us. If anyone adds to the Scriptures, even if they claim to be an angel from heaven, they are to be condemned.

## **1 Thessalonians 2:13**

And we also thank God continually because, when you received the Word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the Word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

## **Translation of Scripture**

Hopefully, these passages help you understand the meaning of inspiration. Some people confuse inspiration with the subject of translation.

The Bible was originally written in Hebrew and Aramaic (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament). Yet, it has been translated into hundreds of languages today. Thousands of scholars throughout

the centuries have made great efforts to make the Word of God available and accurate to all people. Let me encourage you as a truth seeker to continue to be a good student of God's Word in the language you understand, seeking the meaning of the original authors. We have been citing passages of the Bible in this presentation from the New International Version of the Bible. If you read from a different translation or version, the words will be slightly different.

### **Interpretation of Scripture**

Another word that has caused confusion is *interpretation*. Notice again 2 Peter 1:21. The Bible is not a matter of our own interpretation. We must seek out God's original intent in what He said. We need each other's help by comparing our thoughts. Our responsibility is to interpret the scriptures as God intended, not to make them say what we want. Making scriptures say what we want has brought about many different churches.

### **Conclusion**

There are three major pillars of Christianity.

1. There is a God.
2. The Bible is the Word of God.
3. Jesus is the Son of God.

The evidence that Jesus is the Son of God will be covered in the following lessons. You must understand this overall truth: God loves you very much, and He wants you to spend eternity with Him. He provided the way by sending Jesus who can bring you out of sin and into a relationship with Him. The truth of the Bible can be summarized in one word: Jesus. From cover to cover, the Bible tells us about God's plan for our redemption through Jesus. He is the expression of God's love for you. He is the one who came that we might have a relationship with God.

Remember that there is a God. There is evidence all around us to support this truth. He has made Himself known to us through His inspired Word. He loves you and wants you to spend eternity with Him.

# God's Eternal Plan

## Lesson Two

### Introduction

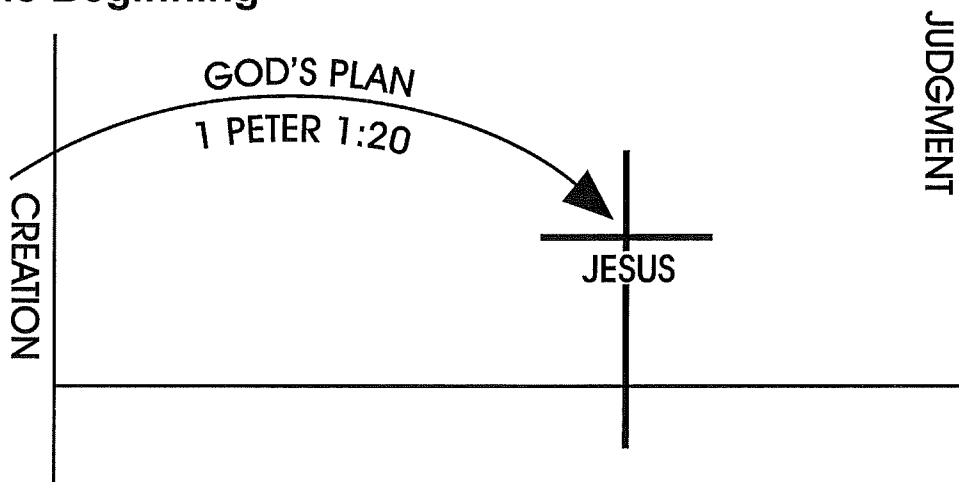
Let's begin this chapter by reminding ourselves of the last thoughts from the previous chapter. A statement that would overview the Bible from cover to cover is, "God loves you very much and He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, the perfect expression of His love because He wants you to spend eternity with Him."

### Overview of the Bible

Having a broad look at the Bible is very important to understanding God's overall message. Throughout His Word, God continues to tell about His love and patience. Look at the table of contents in your Bible. You will find that the Bible is divided into two major sections, Old Testament and New Testament. Have you ever thought about what it means to have a testament from God?

A testament is very similar to the idea of a promise or a covenant. A covenant is a promise between two parties with conditions to be met. In the Bible we read about an old promise and a new promise. God has made a promise to us. The fulfillment of that promise is Jesus. He is what this lesson is all about. We will use an illustration in this lesson, a diagram to help us understand how all the stories of the Bible fit together to tell the story of Jesus.

### In The Beginning



Let the line on the left side of the paper represent the beginning of time and life as we know it. The Bible refers to that as creation. The Bible also tells us that time will end one day. The line on the right side of the page represents the day we will stand before God, and life on this earth will be over. That day in the Bible is called Judgment. Not only is that day going to be the end of time as we know it, but it will also be the beginning of a timeless existence that will continue for eternity, either with God in Heaven or separated from Him in a godless Hell. We will talk more about this later.

Someplace in between creation and judgment (as illustrated by the cross), God sent His Son Jesus in order to buy us back from sin and separation from Him. Think about this: God purposed to send Jesus even before He created the world.

### **1 Peter 1:18-21**

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from our forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

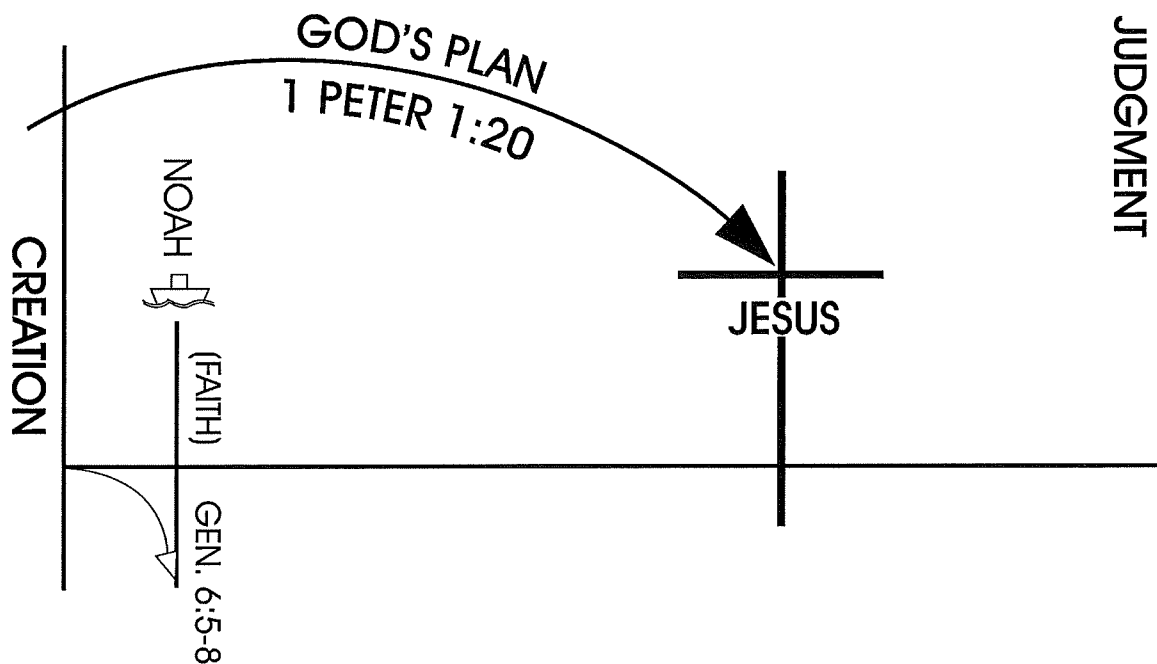
Isn't it amazing that God knew we would need to be saved from our sin even before he created the world? He still loved us enough to create us with free will and the power to decide whether to trust Him or not. Jesus Christ was a part of God's plan before creation. He was chosen or destined before the world was made to become the sin payment for us. Jesus was the Lamb, sacrificed for our redemption. He came to reveal God's will and through Him we can have relationship with God.

Let's go back to creation. God put Adam and Eve in the garden and created them with the ability to make choices. Remember the choice God gave Adam and Eve when He put them in the garden (Genesis 2:15-17). He gave them everything they needed while they were in perfect fellowship with Him. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was in the garden. They were not to eat of it, but God gave them

the choice whether to obey Him or not. If they did eat, they would sin and the consequence would be separation from God.

Later in Genesis 3-5, we are told that Adam and Eve sinned and were removed from God's presence. What really began was a departure from God's way.

## The Condition of Mankind



The horizontal line through the middle of the picture represents God's will for mankind, while the small arrow going downward (from creation to Noah) represents the direction man went. Over the course of nine generations from Adam to Noah, man became very sinful.

### Genesis 6:5-8

The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the Lord said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth – men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air – for I am grieved that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

God loves us so much that He wants a relationship with us. This is why our bad choices hurt Him. This verse does not say why Noah found favor in God's eyes. But in Hebrews 11, we find more of the account.

**Hebrews 11:7**

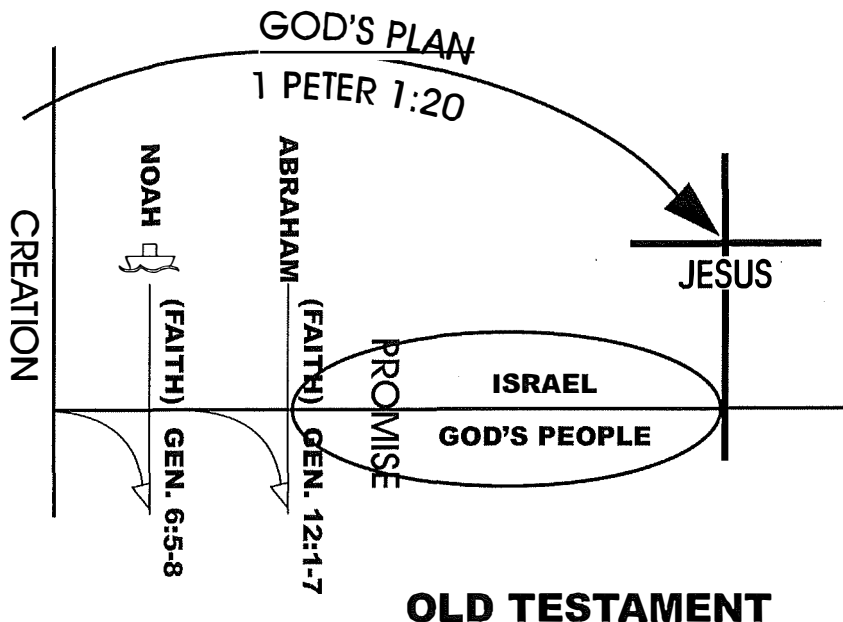
By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

We learn here that Noah's faith is what found favor with God. Noah had a choice, either to follow God or not. Noah's faith or trust in God is what brought about his obedience. This is what made him different from everybody else.

Faith is more than just believing. It is trusting God in an active way. Faith trusts what God says enough to do what He asks. Faith without action is dead (James 2:26). It is not a saving faith when there is no action. This is a brief explanation of faith. We will talk more about it later.

Noah's response of obedience to God brought back the quality level of mankind to what God desired so that He could have fellowship with Noah. However, history repeated itself. Noah's descendents were disobedient to God (Genesis 10:1-9).

**The Plan of God Unfolds through Men of Faith**



Several hundred years after Noah, another man with great faith was obedient to God, Abraham. He had such faith that God made a promise to him. The promise had three parts.

1. God promised that Abraham would become a nation through his descendants who would be too numerous to count.
2. God promised that Abraham's descendants would inherit the land of Canaan and receive God's protection (conditional upon their faithfulness).
3. God promised that through Abraham, all nations would be blessed because Abraham was a direct ancestor of Jesus.

### **Genesis 12:1-3**

The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

### **Genesis 13:15-16; 15:5**

"All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted... Look at the heavens and count the stars – if indeed you can count them. So shall your offspring be."

### **Genesis 18:17-19**

Then the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."

Abraham and his wife were very old, too old to have children, yet God made this promise to them. Miraculously, they gave birth to Isaac. Isaac had twin sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob had twelve sons. Ten of his sons, along with two grandsons, became the twelve tribes of Israel (Israel is denoted by the oval on the diagram). Once you have had that many children, it doesn't take long to have many descendants. Abraham's family began to multiply just as God promised.

The second part of the promise was that God would protect Israel from their enemies and give them a land to live in if they remained faithful to Him (Deuteronomy 28-30, the law of blessing and cursing).

The third part of the promise is the one that is most important to Gentiles, that all nations would be blessed through Israel.

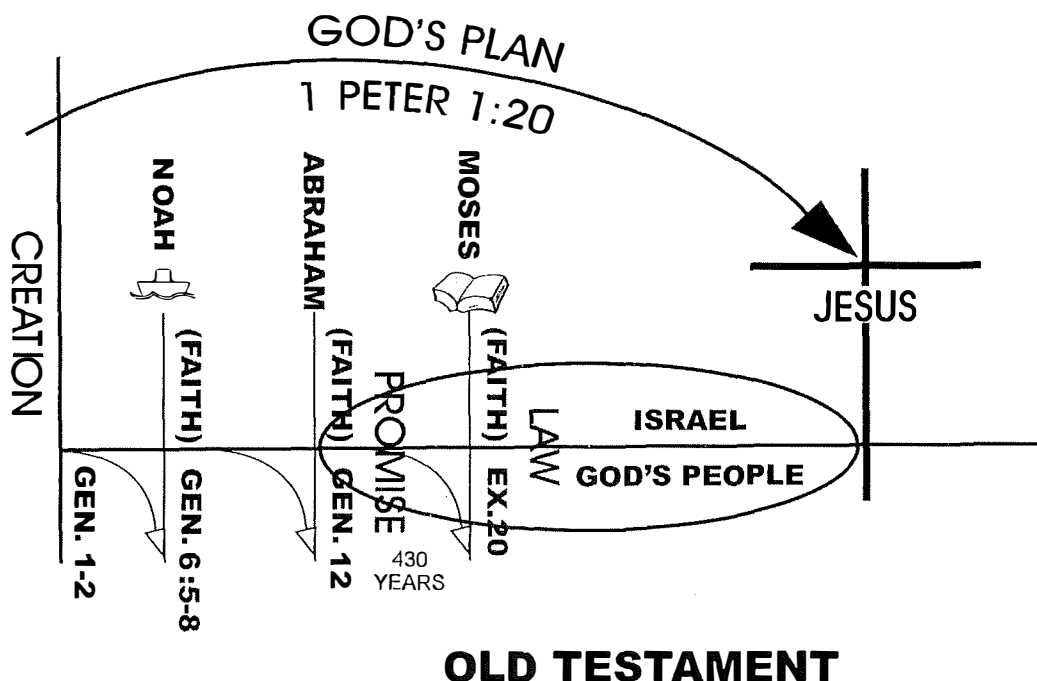
### Galatians 3:16, 26-27, 29

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ... You all are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ... If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

This passage shows us the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. Jesus Christ is the seed of Abraham and through Him all nations can receive God's blessings.

But history repeated itself, and this nation that had a covenant relationship with God departed from His way.

### The Nation of Israel, Led by Moses



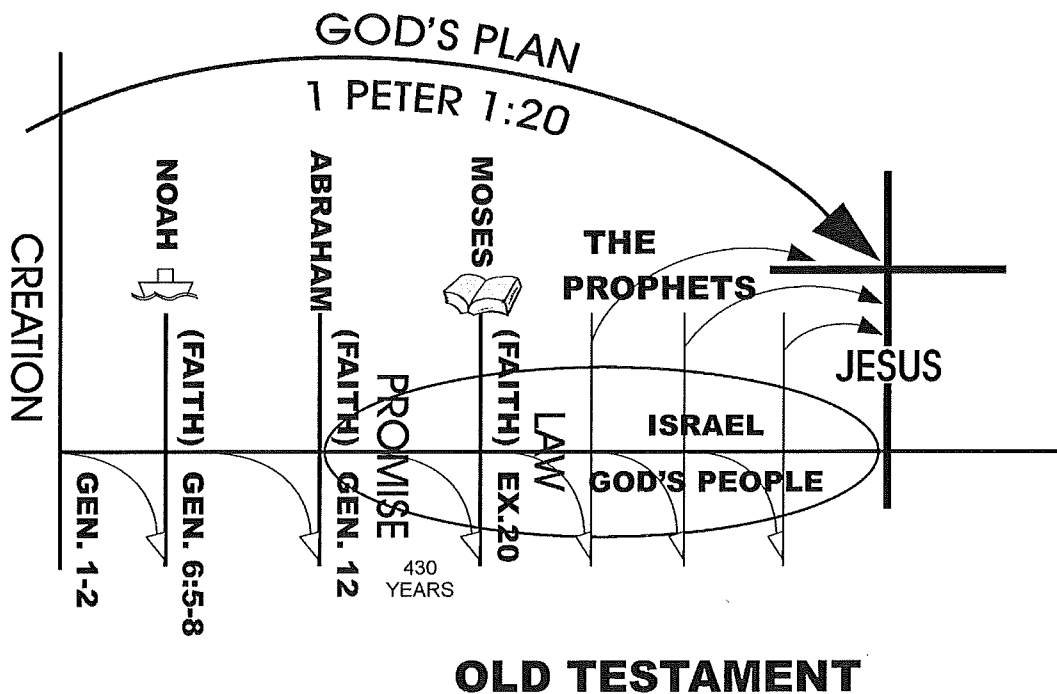


Four hundred thirty years after the promise was made to Abraham, the nation of Israel was separated from God and from their land and they found themselves in bondage in Egypt. They had become a slave nation to the Egyptians. Moses was called by God to lead the people out of bondage. Moses was chosen because of his faith (Hebrews 11:24-27).

If you notice, all of the great people of God lived with a trusting faith. Moses' action was a result of how much he trusted God. He led the people of Israel out of Egypt to Mount Sinai where the law was given (Exodus 20). The people of Israel now had a promise from God and a law to live by also. God also gave them a homeland again, but they still frequently departed from God, demonstrating their lack of faith.

### The Prophets

**NOTE: JESUS IS THE CENTER OF GOD'S PLAN**



Since God's promise of the land was conditional upon their faithfulness, every time they disobeyed, God raised up a nation to take them captive. Then God sent the prophets to remind them of the

law that they were to obey and to remind them that a Messiah was coming.

Prophets were good men, not perfect men, but men who trusted God. They were given a message from God to “tell forth” to the people. This is the literal meaning of the word prophet. The message often told how God saw their disobedience and warned of His judgment. The message sometimes also foretold future events, including the coming of the Messiah and His Kingdom.

All that we have just looked at makes up the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. The first five books are history and law from creation through Moses. The next twelve books are strictly the history of the nation of Israel from the time after Moses through the last book of the Old Testament. The next five books are poetry, songs, and wisdom literature, all of which were used in the Israelites’ worship to God. The next seventeen books are the writings of the prophets. Through the entire Old Testament we see that God had a plan that He made known to His people one step at a time.

Notice how everything is pointing forward to the fulfillment of God’s plan in the coming of Jesus Christ.

## **The New Testament**

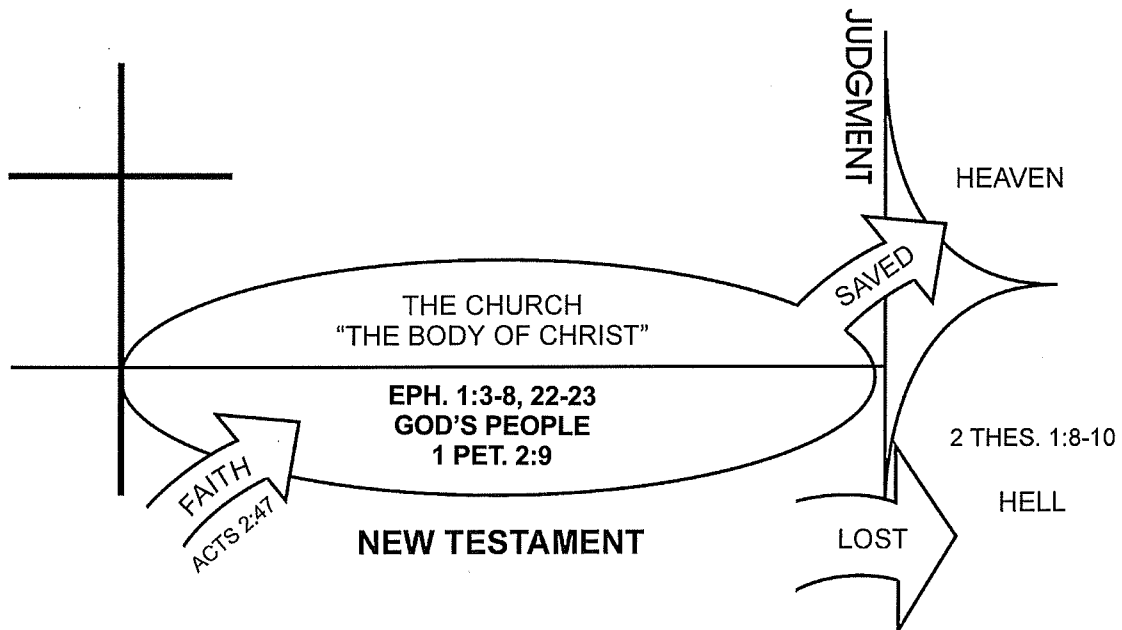
The New Testament tells us that the Messiah did come to earth in fulfillment of God’s plan. He was born in the nation God told Abraham he would be. God foretold what tribe (Judah) and what family (David) in that tribe the Christ would be born. The prophets foretold that he would be born in the city of David (Bethlehem), born of a virgin (Mary). Jesus fulfilled prophecies and predictions made hundreds of years in advance. In fact, Jesus fulfilled 60 major prophecies in the Old Testament and 270 ramifications of those prophecies. The Old Testament gives us plenty of evidence to prove that He is the Messiah.

In the first four books of the New Testament, the Gospels, we find the history of Jesus’ life. Jesus did not come just to be a messenger of God like the prophets. Instead He came to be God’s message; literally, God became flesh and lived among us (John 1:1-18). Jesus was tempted and yet was without sin (Hebrews 4:14-16), and then He

offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins according to God's perfect eternal plan. Jesus was crucified, a painful humiliating death, just like the prophets said (Isaiah 53). Jesus went willingly to the cross to pay a price for our sin that we could not pay. He did this so we could spend eternity with Him if we put our faith and trust in Him.

Three days after His crucifixion, God raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus appeared to the apostles for a period of forty days speaking about the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:1-3). Then they watched Him as he ascended to heaven where He has gone to prepare a place for us (John 14:1-4).

About ten days later, Jesus sent the promised Holy Spirit from God to empower the apostles and inspire them to preach the message of salvation to the whole world. This brought about the birth of the church, the Kingdom of God (Acts 2).



The book of Acts is the next book of the New Testament. It also is a history book like the gospels. It tells about the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church throughout the Roman Empire.

The next major division of the New Testament, from the book of Romans through the book of Jude, is a collection of letters that were

written to churches and individuals that we read about in the book of Acts. They were all a part of the one church that Jesus came to establish. It is interesting to note that the letters of the New Testament were for correction and encouragement so that the people of God would know how to live the Christian life. God's purpose and plan for the church was that He might be glorified through the lives of these people (Ephesians 1:12).

In these letters we learn how to live life abundantly. We learn how to love one another, how to be good husbands and wives, and how to build healthy relationships with each other as well as with God through faith in Christ Jesus.

The final book in the New Testament is Revelation. This book is more difficult to understand because it is written figuratively. Here Jesus tells the church of the first century what will soon take place and reassures them of their eternal home with God.

There you have it, from cover to cover, the unfolding drama of redemption, God revealing himself and His will for us. When we look at the big picture, it is easier to understand what part we play as members of His church.

The church that we read about doesn't have a name. The word church means "the assembled together" or "the called out." It is often referred to as "the body of Christ," "the saved," "the redeemed," "the reconciled." These are all phrases describing these people and their relationship with God. You, too, can be a part of His church.

In the diagram, the arrow pointing to heaven is the essence of the promise to this body of people who have put their faith in Jesus Christ. Another choice is pictured by the larger arrow that represents those who are lost, separated from God because of sin. They will spend eternity separated from Him in a godless Hell.

### **Matthew 7:13-14**

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

## **Conclusion**

I hope this lesson has helped you realize that God does love you and that throughout the ages He has provided a way for people to be with Him forever. Through faith in Christ Jesus you can receive God's forgiveness, His grace, His mercy. Again let me remind you that the Bible from cover to cover tells how much God loves you. Jesus is the manifestation of that love. He was willing to go to the cross and die for your sins. Won't you put your trust in Him?

