

LESSON 9

GREAT BIBLE THEMES

AN ETERNAL PLAN FOR US

After our study of the nature of the Creator of the universe we want to devote a number of lessons to a study of His plans and purposes for His creation and especially for man which was His greatest creation. It will help each of us to enter into His plans if we can come to understand the purpose for which we were created and the purpose for including us in His plans for all eternity.

The following questions will serve as a guide for our discussion today. You may find it interesting to try to anticipate the answers that we find in God's Word.

1. Does the Bible teach that God has a great eternal purpose for the faithful believers in Jesus?
2. If we should begin our study with the first of the Old Testament and continue by reading from many of the prophecies, what would we find about God's purpose? Make a list of the specific things that we learn from the references given about this purpose.

LET US LOOK TO THE BIBLE FOR OUR ANSWERS

Our universe is very definitely an orderly one. We see everything proceeding in a systematic way in the natural world. This orderly procedure enables us to set forth the laws of nature. The

scientist can predict an eclipse of the sun many years from now because we understand that the sun and the planets move in a well-planned and orderly way. From such considerations as these we would expect the spiritual world to be governed by a definite plan. The same God is the author of both. Did God have some great eternal purpose in mind for the human race? Let us first look to 1 Corinthians 2:7, "But we speak the wisdom of God in a _____, even the _____ wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto _____." Notice carefully the points Paul made in this verse. Does he state that God had planned or ordained something for our glory even before the world was made? We should be the more interested in these plans since they were for our glory. In verse 9 we have the very important statement regarding the magnitude of these things He had planned for us. "But as it is written, _____, nor _____, neither have entered into the _____ of _____, the things which God hath _____ for them that _____." These statements are true of the world to come, but Paul quotes them in reference to the blessings God had in store for people living in the Christian age. The next verse tells us how these things became known, "But God hath _____ them unto us by his _____." Do these references indicate that God had some great eternal purpose for us even before the creation of the world?

Notice also the parallel passage given in the third chapter of Ephesians. We want to notice especially verses five and six, then verses nine and eleven. In the preceding verses he had referred to the mystery, "Which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now _____ unto his holy

_____ and by the _____; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs; and of the same body, and partakers of his _____ in _____ by the _____." Now verse nine. "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the _____ hath been hid in _____, who created all things by Jesus Christ." Would you consider verse 11 a more clear cut statement of God's purpose for us than these already given? "According to the _____ which he _____ in _____ our _____."

It is very evident from these passages as well as from many others that from the very beginning God planned some great things for his people. These things were not completely known in the Old Testament times, but remained a "mystery" until they were revealed to the apostles through the Holy Spirit. It is our purpose in the next few lessons to study about this great eternal purpose of our Creator. We plan to take an historical approach to this topic beginning with the first of the Bible and continuing by noticing some of the things that were gradually revealed in the Old testament concerning His plans for us. Would you expect to find these plans complete in very detail in the Old Testament?

Let us suppose that we know nothing about God's purpose for us and that we want to look to some of the passages in the Old Testament which tell us about it. Since this is a tremendously important study we will want to examine each reference carefully to see what it tells about these plans.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. He made man to have dominion over the remainder of the creation as he placed him in a special garden which had been prepared for

him. His divine record pictures them as happy in their home where they could walk and talk with God. All was well until the devil persuaded them to disobey God. As a result of this disobedience a curse was pronounced upon Adam and Eve and upon the devil. They were then driven from the garden and from the presence of God. (If you have not read Genesis chapters two and three recently, you will enjoy doing so now.) But in the hour of their grief at being separated from God, they were given His promise of some future event. This was a dim ray of hope. You will find it in 3:15. "And I will put enmity between thee (the devil) and the woman, and between thy _____ and her _____; it shall _____, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Would you say that about the only thing this verse says about God's eternal purpose is that Satan's head was to be bruised by the seed (descendant) of Eve?

Very little is recorded about the two thousand years after the creation and fall of man. And still less about the purposes of God. At the close of this time we do find a fuller revelation concerning the divine purpose. God called Abraham to leave his people and to journey to a land that He would show him. On one occasion He tried Abraham's faith by asking him to offer his son on the altar as a sacrifice. Abraham would have offered his son had God not stopped him and given him a ram to offer instead. It is in this connection that we have our next reference. Genesis 22:18, "And in thy _____ shall _____ of the _____ be _____; because thou has obeyed my voice." We may notice two things from this verse; first, it was part of God's plan to bless _____ at some future date, and second, such blessings were to come through the descendants of Abraham.

Some 400 years after this the Lord used Moses as a leader to deliver the children of Israel from the bondage of the Egyptians. Notice the promise God made him which gives us a little better insight into His eternal purpose. Deuteronomy 18:18-19, "I will raise them up a _____ from among their brethren, _____ (Moses), and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall _____ unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not _____ which he shall speak _____, I will _____ it of him." (You will recall this passage from previous lessons). How many new ideas are set forth in these verses regarding God's plans? Would you say that He planned to bless the world through a prophet who would bring a message from God? Would we conclude from this that the Lord had in mind to bless all who would be good neighbors, or all who were of the right political mind, or all those of certain nationalities, or all who would hear God's message as given by this prophet?

In the prophecies of Isaiah we have a number of references which deal directly with our study for today. Let us look first to 9:6-7, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the _____ shall be _____: and his name shall be called _____, _____, The _____, the _____, The _____ of _____. Of the _____ of his _____ and peace there shall be _____, upon the _____ of _____, and upon his _____, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice from henceforth even _____

_____ . The zeal of the Lord of hosts will _____ this." You will need to read this several times in order to see just how many different things are mentioned regarding God's plans for the future. Notice the following expressions in this reference, "The government shall be upon his shoulder", "upon the throne of David", and "upon his kingdom". What do these indicate regarding His plans for the future? Would you say that it was God's plan to send someone who would be a king ruling over a kingdom that would last forever? Re-read the names by which this One was to be called. Do they give us an idea of the nature of the work of the One who was to come? Of course, we understand that these references point to Jesus. We should also note the reference to David's throne. David was one of the great kings of Israel and God had promised him that He would raise up a king to sit on his throne. (See Acts 2:29-36, Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. (AKJV).

Many of these prophecies refer to a coming of a king, but in Isaiah 35:8 an entirely different figure of speech is used. "And an _____ shall be there, and a _____, and it shall be called The _____; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." Notice too, the figure of speech given in Isaiah 40:11. "He shall _____ like a _____: he shall gather the _____ with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall _____ those that are with young." The first of these references tells of a way of _____, in which there shall be no unclean thing. The second shows the tender care that was to characterize the attitude of the gentle shepherd king toward his flock.

In the 53rd chapter of Isaiah we have many prophecies concerning Christ. We want to notice verses three, five, seven and eleven. They reveal additional facts about the purpose of the Lord in sending a promised savior and king. In spite of the fact that this king was to come to bless all nations, "He is _____ and _____ of men; a man of _____, and acquainted with _____." Why was He so mistreated? "But he was wounded for our _____, he was bruised for our _____." Notice carefully the last half of verse seven which tells us of the fact that he was slain. "He is brought as a _____ to the _____, and as a _____ before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." But we may ask, "How was this to fit into God's eternal purpose?" The answer to this question is given in verse 11. You will need to read it several times in order to appreciate God's purpose in this sacrifice. "He (God) shall see the _____ of his (Christ's) soul, and

shall be _____.” The scriptures teach that man cannot be saved by his own goodness, and since all have sinned, all fall short of the glory of God. This last reference just means that when God was to see the anguish and the shed blood of this promised king as he was to be lead as a sheep to the slaughter that He would be satisfied to let this blood take the place of my sins and yours. Nothing else could satisfy for our sins.

Time or space will not permit us to mention many other passages given in Isaiah and in many of the other prophets. We do want to notice, briefly, a few of the prophecies of Daniel regarding the nature of the Lord’s plans. In the second chapter of Daniel we have the record of a dream of the king and Daniel’s interpretation of it. In the dream, the king saw a small stone cut out of the mountain without hands. It became larger and larger until it broke to pieces a great image and then continued to grow until it “became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.” In explaining this dream Daniel said that the different portions of this image represented certain kingdoms of the earth. He then says (2:44) “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a _____, which shall _____ be _____; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.” It would be interesting to make a more detailed study of this prophecy, but for our purpose we want to notice that the kingdom to be established was to stand _____. It was to be small in its beginning, but would grow until it filled the earth. It was cut out without hands which signifies that the Lord started it.

You will enjoy re-reading 1 Corinthians 2:9 which tells of the greatness of these plans for us. 1 Corinthians 2:9, But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered

into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (AKJV)

TEST

1. God has a plan for man's redemption. (True or False)

2. The first written reference to some plan of God for the complete overthrow of Satan is found in Genesis 3:15 (True of False) _____
3. God's eternal purpose or plan for man's salvation was to center in: (a) Abraham, (b) John, (c) Jesus, (d) apostle Paul.

4. The promise God made unto Abraham was for: (a) the Jews only, (b) all nations, (c) Gentiles only, (d) Abraham's own personal benefit. _____
5. The prophet mentioned in Deuteronomy 18:18-19 has reference to: (a) Jesus, (b) Joshua, (c) Isaiah, (d) John the Baptist. _____
6. Isaiah foretells of a kingdom, government and a throne to belong to: (a) Moses, (b) Christ, (c) David, (d) Peter.

7. Isaiah (did, did not) foretell Christ's death. _____
8. Daniel prophesied that the kingdom God would set up would be: (a) a temporary kingdom, (b) an everlasting kingdom, (c) set up long after kings ceased to reign, (d) destroyed by an evil force. _____

9. Isaiah said that in the future there would be a way called: (a) a narrow way, (b) way of conscience, (c) a way of universal salvation, (d) way of holiness. _____
10. Did God plan to exclude the Jews in his plan which was from the beginning of the world? (Yes or No) _____

Score: 10 points for each correct answer _____

Correct answers to test questions in lesson 8:

1. (c)
2. (does)
3. (no)
4. (a)
5. (did)
6. (d)
7. (obey)
8. (gospel)
9. (b)
10. (true)

List below others who wish to take this course.