



God's plan for

YOU

Historically, did everything just happen by chance or did God have a master plan?

By David Thomas

The Bible tells us that sin came into God's perfect world in the first chapter of human history. The cost of that rebellion was felt from the moment the first people disobeyed, as the wonderful communion that Adam and Eve had always known with God was severed.

But even as God pronounced judgment upon them, He gave a promise, spoken as a curse on the enemy who tempted them to fall: The Seed of the woman would come and crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15). This is the promise of a Redeemer, a descendant of the first humans, but at the same time not subject to Satan's wiles and therefore able to defeat him.

Simply put, the Bible gives us the story of God's fulfillment of that promise, and Satan's futile attempts to avoid the doom pronounced upon him in the Garden.

The first of what might be called the "mighty acts" of God in this plan of redemption were the Flood and the events surrounding the Tower of Babel. God's actions in both cases are very similar. He was keeping rebellion in check. If human sin were to get so out of hand that the race became completely corrupted, then the Redeemer could not come.

In the case of the Flood, all people were destroyed except for one righteous family. In the case of the Tower of Babel, human plans to stand against God were frustrated. Both were examples of God's "severe mercy," and salvation history marched on.

When God called Abram (later named Abraham), God's plan began to take more definite shape. God had chosen a man through whom He would create a holy nation. God's promise that all nations would be blessed through Abraham was repeated to his descendants Isaac and Jacob (later called Israel). This promise makes clear that even as God was calling out a family from which He would form a nation, it was always God's intention to use them for the redemption of the world.

How He would do this became clear in His time.

In the course of time, Israel

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went from being a small clan to being a nation of mighty tribes. After they spent years in slavery in Egypt, God delivered the Israelites. In spite of their own acts of rebellion, the tribes finally entered the Promised Land by God's grace.

Ancient Israel, like modern Israel, was located at the crossroads of the world where three continents meet. In ancient times this land was the highway between the mightiest empires in the world. When Israel served God, this location served them well; when they did not, it provided the means for their enemies to vanquish them.

But it is important to note that either way God's purposes were served. Why? Because God's plan was to use His people (ironically, even when they disobeyed) as a means to bring His light to the nations. They were always meant to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6, NIV).

Although much has been spoken about Israel's failures, it is important to recognize that God had already allowed for their weaknesses within His plan, and His purposes were right on track in spite of His judgment on their sin.

One event is especially important in Israel's history. When God promised David an eternal kingdom, the promise of the Seed became even clearer (2 Samuel 7). It is from this point that the idea of a Messiah became more and more important to God's people as they awaited full

redemption. Through the prophets God also revealed that His Messiah was to be the Savior to the nations.

"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law" (Galatians 4:4). Jesus was born of a virgin in God's perfect time as simple Man, to save simple men. His holy life, His teachings, His miracles, and His claims about himself all testified that He was the sinless Son of God, the awaited Messiah.

Yet to achieve salvation, Jesus had to do more than set an example. He had to die, allowing the serpent to strike His heel so that He might fulfill His Father's Word and crush the serpent's head. With His resurrection, Jesus was proven to be who He claimed, the foretold Seed of the woman, and salvation history had reached its watershed.

Jesus' work on the Cross signals the beginning of the end. Now the promise to Abraham is fulfilled. All nations — not just the Israelites — may enter into covenant relationship with God through Christ. This worldwide body of people who enter this relationship is the Church.

This plan of redemption is not "Plan B" as some have contended, but rather God's perfect design from the beginning. Jesus is "the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). This means that the Crucifixion stands apart from every other "mighty act" of salvation God has ever worked. The Cross is not another "knot" in the "scarlet thread of redemption." It is the pillar at the center of all history around which that thread is wrapped.

Because of this, we live on borrowed time. The drama of history continues, but its actors play their roles with shortness of breath. We are commanded to take this gospel of redemption to every creature, to urgently work in the harvest fields of the Lord of the harvest while it is day. So we labor, knowing that the Master of the house may return at any time. Since He has already accomplished everything by the Cross, nothing impedes the King who came once as a Lamb to come again, finally, as the Lion of Judah.

When Jesus comes, the dead in Him will rise. With Him they will reign on earth 1,000 years

so that God's original purposes and promises will be fulfilled within the scope of human history. Final judgment upon the wicked will follow, and then Jesus will turn all dominion over to His Father.

The Bible speaks of a glorious eternity in a new creation, but even the sweeping drama of Revelation surely cannot capture what it will be like. As awesome as the glory of the New Jerusalem will be, the highest glory of all is the fulfillment of God's precreation plan of a loving, eternal family. The apostle Paul says it most clearly when he simply writes, "We will be with the Lord forever" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). **tpe**

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