

The Church – God's One Eternal Plan

Text : **Ephesians 1: 3-23**

S#1.

INTRODUCTION :

A. We live in a time of rapid change.

S#2.

1. For millenniums the world went along with little change.
 - a. The ruler might change and bring about superficial changes.
 - b. Life began and ended in one small area where to basic rules never changed.
 - c. People lived and worked much as their ancestors had done. (*cloths, tools, etc.*)
2. Travel was expanded by the Greeks and especially the Romans.
 - a. People were exposed to different cultures, languages, products, and techniques.
 - b. Soldiers brought their culture with them and took cultures home with them.
 - c. Roads and shipping broadened the horizons of commerce challenges social values.
3. The industrial revolution brought about major disruptions in established society.
 - a. People's ties to the land were broken by the migration to industrial centers.
 - b. People no longer grouped together in the secure community of extended families.
 - c. Couples from families of very different backgrounds began marrying.
* *The ancients married cousins to insure this did not happen. (Isaac, Jacob, etc)*
4. As mobility expands, social change expands and that is generally to our detriment.

S#3.

B. Mankind is now in the midst of a revolution that dwarfs the industrial revolution.

1. Whether we use it or not, the new technology has affected every aspect of our lives.
2. The most obvious change is in the way we interact with other people.
 - a. We have to comb our hair before we answer the phone because they can see us.
 - b. People will text their neighbor instead of talking to him.
 - c. It takes longer to type an email note than it does for it to be delivered.
3. Technology has changed the way we learn, thus, affecting our values systems.
 - a. More information is available at our finger tips than we can find in many libraries.
 - b. Universities are pricing themselves out; one can now learn most any skill on line.
 - c. Evil always capitalizes on innovation so the internet created a pornography boom.
4. Technology has affected the way we work.
 - a. Computers are a part of just about every job on the planet.

- b. Computer operated robots perform many of the tasks that men used to do.
- c. Technology links people from all over the world together to work on one project.

C. The linking of men together may be contrary to the will of God.

S#4.

1. Remember Babel :

S#5.

Gen. 11: 6-8 The Lord said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. ⁷ Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech." ⁸ So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city.

S#6.

- 2. When men unify, evil is easily spread from the few to all.
 - a. A few loud voices have lead to the death of millions of unborn children.
 - b. Similar voices have lead to the acceptance of homosexuality, same sex marriage.
 - c. Less than 10% of the population is causing religion to be put in the closet.
- 3. Technology has made the spread of this evil possible by linking people anonymously.
 - a. Once linked by faceless media, evil is emboldened.
 - b. Shame and social pressure is taken out of the equation.

D. Consequently, the world we live in seems to be changing ever more rapidly.

- 1. Those who seek prosperity in this world must adapt or be left behind.
- 2. It seems that by the time one masters the new, it's out of date.
- 3. There is one thing that never changes ... **God He provides stability in**

S#7.

Hebrews 13: 8-9a Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
⁹ Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; ...

S#8.

We will never have to adjust to a change in the will or the intent of God :

I. God established His plan before this physical realm was created.

S#9.

A. God has not told us everything and will not tell us everything.

S#10.

- 1. **Deut. 29: 29** – The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, ...
- 2. God tells us what HE wants us to know when HE wants us to know it.
 - a. Man must respect God's authority to withhold information.
 - b. *Seeking to know what has not been revealed is rebellion against God.*

3. There are some things that even Jesus was not told. **S#11.**

a. **Mark 13: 31-32** Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. ³² But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

b. Are we better than the Son of God that we should know all the mind of God ?
Matt. 10: 24 – A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master.

B. God has revealed His plan to man as we needed to know it. S#12.

1. Jesus revealed some things hidden since before the world was created. **S#13.**

Matt.13: 35 – This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:
“I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things
hidden since the foundation of the world.”

2. It was necessary for God to keep some things hidden.

a. **I Cor. 2: 7-8** but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom **S#14.**
which God predestined before the ages to our glory; ⁸ the wisdom
which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they
had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;

b. Imagine if Satan had protected Jesus from being sacrificed ? **NO Salvation !**

C. In the mind of God, His plan was completed before the world was created. S#15.

1. The sacrifice of Jesus was determined before man was created.

I Pet. 1: 20 – For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, **S#16.**
but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you

2. God revealed His plan at the time HE chose. **S#17.**

Rom. 16: 25-26 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel
and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of
the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, ²⁶ **S#18.**
but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets,
according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made
known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;

3. *It's critical to our discernment that we understand that with God, ALL time* **#19.**
is now. Being eternal and omniscient, time is irrelevant to God. (cf. – II Pet. 3: 8)

D. God alone decided the time when His plan should be implemented. S#20.

1. **Gal. 4: 4** – But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son,
born of a woman, born under the Law,

2. As with the return of Christ, God didn't give hints as to when it might be.

a. Though curious, the prophets were not absorbed with speculation. (**I Pet. 1:10-12**)

b. God gave **no** explanation as to why the time was right.

II. Man was never at the center of God's thinking; he was created for God's glory. 21

A. The ego of man causes him to think of himself more highly than he ought.

1. This physical universe was the created by God **FOR** God.

Col. 1: 16 – For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. S#22.

2. For God to create this universe was like man painting a painting.

** One paints a work of art for his own pleasure and to be enjoyed by others.*

B. God's entire plan was in place before God even created man, i.e., "before the foundation of the world."

S#23.

1. The sacrifice of Jesus was "foreknown". **I Pet. 1: 19-20** S#24.
2. The mode of His death was predetermined before creation. **Acts 22: 22-24**
3. His church was foreknown. **Eph. 3: 10-11**
4. His gospel was foreknown before. **Rom. 16: 25-27**
5. His kingdom **Matt. 28: 34**
6. His grace **II Tim. 1: 8-10** S#25.
7. His Love **John 17: 24**
8. His teaching **Matt 13: 34-35**
9. Hope in Christ **Titus 1: 2** ALL before the foundation of the world.

** Thus, man came after all these things.*

C. God is sovereign over much more than just our universe.

S#26.

1. There is a whole world that we do not see, but which is very real.
 - a. It is far more extensive than just this earth or even our solar system.
 - b. It is inhabited by beings of great power. (*The spies saw giants; they had less power.*)
2. Paul's letter to the Ephesians refers to this realm as "heavenly places."
 - a. This term is unique to the Ephesian letter.
 - b. It is mentioned five times in this epistle.
3. Though it is called "heavenly places." it does not refer to Heaven alone.
 - a. Jesus is there.
 - b. We are there.
 - c. Evil beings are there so it could not be Heaven.

D. If it isn't Heaven, what are the heavenly places? Let's look at the 5 texts. S#27.

1. **Eph. 6: 12** – For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. S#28.

- a. There is an ongoing war in the “heavenly places.”
- b. It is against spiritual forces which are both powerful and evil.

2. **Eph. 3: 8-10** To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, ⁹ and bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which to for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; ¹⁰ **so that** the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. S#29. S#30.

- a. It was God who hid the mystery. (*kept unrevealed truth*)
- b. The hidden mystery is Christ.
- c. “**So that**” ... The hidden mystery was revealed for a purpose.
- d. The purpose was to reveal the widely varied wisdom of God.
- e. The revelation was for the benefit of the rulers in the “heavenly places.”
- f. This manifestation of wisdom is to be accomplished by the church.

3. **Eph. 1: 20** – which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, S#31.

- a. Other passages : Jesus is in Heaven seated at the right hand of God. (**I Pet. 3: 22**)
- b. This passage : Jesus is seated at God's right hand in the “heavenly places.”
- c. Therefore, the heavenly places must extend into Heaven.

4. **Eph. 2: 6** – and raised us up with Him, and seated US with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, S#32.

- a. When born again, Christians are placed beside Jesus in the “heavenly places.”
- b. This is a present tense verb derived from an aorist root. (*complete w/ ongoing result*)
- c. Thus, “heavenly places” also incorporate where we are right now.

5. **Eph. 1: 3** – Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, S#33.

- a. God supplies blessings to all men. (**Matt. 5: 45**)
- b. Christians receive every spiritual blessing **in** the “heavenly places.”
- c. All Christians are added to His body which is His church. (**Ax 2:47, Gal 3:27**)

**** Therefore, the eternal plan of God is not just about the salvation of mankind. S#34.**

III. God has had one eternal plan from the beginning for all time.

S#35.

- A. We have seen that the eternal plan of God originated before time began. S#36.
- B. The eternal plan of God involved the vicarious death and resurrection of Christ.
- C. God used the Jews in bring about His eternal plan, but it was never about them.
 - 1. God used the Jews because He made promises to Abraham.
 - 2. God used the tribe of Judah because He made promises to David.
 - 3. When the promises were fulfilled, God severed ties with the Jews and judged them.
- D. God did not give one way to approach Him and then change his mind.
The law that was given by Moses to the Jews was never part of God’s plan. S#37.
 - 1. Exod. 19 ... The law of Moses was given only to the Jews.
 - 2. Gal. 3 .. That law was not redemptive, the law of their land, God was their King.
 - 3. We have seen (Eph. 3) that God’s eternal plan included gentiles.

CONCLUSION :

- A. The gospel of Christ is God’s eternal plan. S#38.
 - 1. There has been no other.
 - 2. There will be no other.
- B. The gospel manifests God’s wisdom to all in both realms. (*spiritual & physical*)
 - 1. By the gospel God is able to be both merciful and just.
 - 2. By it God can save man in spite of the weakness of his flesh.
- C. God’s plan is available to all. S#39.
 - 1. One must know His plan in order to have faith.
 - 2. If one will be saved, he must accept God’s plan as his own plan.
- D. Once a person has been saved by God’s plan, he must share it with others. S#40.
 - 1. Sharing God’s plan leads lost people to be saved. ... Mark 16: 15-16 , II Tim 2: 2
 - 2. Sharing God’s plan brings glory to Him in the spiritual realm.

INVITATION :

We urge you to become an active part of God’s plan.

S#41.

Lesson Text :**Ephesians 1: 3-23**

3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, **4** just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love **5** He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, **6** to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. **7** In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace **8** which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight **9** He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him **10** with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is*, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him **11** also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, **12** to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. **13** In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, **14** who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.

15 For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you and your love for all the saints, **16** do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers; **17** that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. **18** *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, **19** and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might **20** which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, **21** far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. **22** And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, **23** which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.