

In the Beginning: God's Plan

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[0 : 00] Let's share our prayer together. Heavenly Father, we humbly bow in your presence. May your word be our rule, your spirit our teacher, and your great glory our supreme concern.

! Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.! You are planning to fail. A haphazard approach to let's say home decorating or making a journey or achieving any desired outcome will not produce good results.

Planning is essential. Our God has a plan. Our God and Father has always had a plan.

There is no circumstance or situation which will arise in your life or mine which is not covered by God's plan. When bringing his people out of Egypt, the people came out and they tramped along and they came to the shores of the Red Sea and they decided to panic.

How are we going to get across? God had already planned to call up the east wind and blow a dry path through the sea so that the people could cross over.

[1 : 33] When faced with the rebellion of Adam and Eve, God did not panic back in Genesis 3. Immediately, God spoke the promise of a saviour.

One who would come and crush the head of the serpent. And in God's time, at just the right time, according to his plan, God brought the Lord Jesus Christ among us to endure the cross and the grave for us and our salvation.

There is no plan B with our God. There is only one great, gracious, generous, glorious plan A.

Thanks be to God. The point of the story of Noah, all of the story of Noah, is to teach us that God has a plan.

God will keep all the promises he has made. God will be righteous in judging and punishing evil. God will be righteous in the world.

[3 : 14] We cannot overcome the spread of human wickedness by our own efforts. But God has a plan. God has always known what he will do.

And he puts his saving plan into saving effect. Now, just before we get too far into the story of Noah, you may know there are other ancient accounts of floods coming and destroying the world. They were written down in tablets of stone or bits of parchment in Sanskrit. I'm leaving Sanskrit for my retirement.

But we're going to get there one day. But they've been translated and written down in books. And so because they're in books, I've read them. And I thought it would be good to assure you of the differences between what we read in the Bible of the flood and what we read in these other accounts outside the Bible of the flood.

So here we are. The account in the Old Testament assures us there is only one God. The non-biblical accounts present us with many gods.

[4 : 39] A whole lot of gods who petulantly argue and fight and squabble amongst themselves. The Old Testament presents one God who is in control.

The other accounts of floods present a host of what are called gods but end up terrified at the prospect of a flood. And not in control at all.

The Old Testament in writing about the flood assures us that God acts to preserve humanity and animal life through the flood.

But in the non-biblical accounts we read of the one who becomes the supreme God being surprised. To discover that humans have actually survived the flood.

What are called gods didn't care about humans. Their only thought was to save themselves. And so they are surprised that anything has survived apart from them.

[5 : 47] The Bible teaches us that the cause of the flood is human wickedness. The non-biblical accounts tell us that the cause of the flood is that humans are making too much noise.

And disrupting the rest of the gods. Their peace and quiet is being disturbed. And there are just too many of them. And we need to thin them out a bit.

The superficial similarities between these accounts. Which amount to nothing more than there was a lot of rain and a flood. Hide the important differences.

Between the Bible and everything else. The story in the Bible is about our God and our Father. And is told for his glory and our salvation.

The story of Noah should really be known as the story of God's gracious plan. God's gracious solution. And God's gracious covenant.

[6 : 53] I wonder if you have noticed those times you have read through the story of Noah. Noah. Nowhere in the part of the flood. Are there any records of Noah speaking any words.

In the whole story the only time Noah speaks. Is in chapter 9 when he curses Canaan the son of Ham. Hardly impressive. In all the story Noah is not taking the initiative.

Noah is not the active person in the story. Noah is obedient. Noah responds to what God says.

All the way through God speaks. God acts. God directs. God is in control. The story is about our God.

And so the more time we spend counting camels or sheep. Or wondering what happened to those unicorns. And I know you all remember the Irish Rovers singing about that song.

[7 : 58] The more time we spend doing that. The less time we spend noticing God. And his grace. And his mercy.

Which is the point of the story. So today we're reading about God's plan. And there are two things to notice. God plans to work together with Noah.

Noah becomes a fellow worker with God. In achieving God's plan. And then we notice that all the way through.

It is God who is powerfully at work. To achieve his gracious plan. So let's begin with God working together with Noah.

In verse 13. God speaks to Noah. Telling Noah about the part he must play. In God's plan. Make yourself an ark. The making of an ark.

[8 : 59] It turns out. Took 120 years. Noah had to invest his time. In this work. Noah. Either already knew.

How to work with wood. Or he had to learn. The skills. Of a wood worker. And boat builder. He had to use his talent.

To build the ark. Noah had to invest his own money. And his own resources. In providing the gopher wood. That was needed.

To build this huge ark. In short. Living in God's story for Noah. Involved using his time.

His talents. And his money. In God's service. As well as that. Obedience to God's command.

[9 : 56] Make an ark. Noah would be exposed. To ridicule. I'm sure at some time. You've imagined the conversation. Noah. Starts building this thing out of wood.

And his neighbours come along. What are you building Noah? I'm building a big boat. And they look around. And they say to Noah. But you're not near the sea. You're not even near a river.

What are you building a boat for? And the only answer. Noah can give is. God told me to. And we have to imagine.

His neighbours looking at the time. And the effort. And the money. Noah was spending on this. Look at him. And what he's wasting.

But Noah built the ark. Down in verse 21. Noah is told to take with you. Every sort of food. Now at this point.

[10 : 57] Noah doesn't know. How long he's going to be in the ark. But he's told to make provision for food. For the eight members of his family. And for all the animals. And then.

The highlight of Noah's part. In the story. In verse 22. 22. Noah did this. He did all that God commanded him. And verse 5.

In chapter 7. Noah did all. That the Lord had commanded him. Every single time. When you're reading the Bible. And close together.

You see. The same phrase. Repeated. In this case. Almost word for word. You're supposed to stop. And notice.

And reflect on how important. That repeated phrase is. In achieving God's plan. God chooses to work together with Noah.

[11 : 57] They are fellow workers. Noah's work. In achieving God's plan. Is entirely described. By him doing. All that the Lord.

His God. Commanded him. Now someone might be thinking. That I'm overstating things here. Describing Noah. As God's co-worker.

Well here's what the Apostle Paul. Writes about Timothy. 1 Thessalonians 3. 2. We say. Timothy. Our brother. And. God's co-worker.

God's co-worker. In the gospel. Of Christ. To establish. And exhort you. In your faith. When God. Transforms.

The lives. Of women. And men. Through the death. And resurrection. Of Jesus. He immediately. Co-opt. Those whose lives. Are transformed. To work.

[12 : 54] In his. Mission. God. Powerfully. Pours out. His Holy Spirit. Upon us. So that we can do. All that he has. Commanded us.

All the disciples. Of Jesus. Are engaged. By God. To work. Together. With him. To achieve. His great plan.

To save. To renew. And restore. All creation. You don't get. To opt. Out. There is no.

Other employment. For a disciple. Of Jesus. If you are going. To follow Jesus. Where else. Did you think. He would lead you. Jesus.

Will lead you. Into God's. Work. For you. Into God's. Workplace. And he will. Set you. To work. God's.

[13 : 50] Workplace. Is your home. Your street. Your city. Your nation. Wherever. God. Calls you. To live. In his story. God's.

Plan. Is for you. To be his agent. Of grace. To make. Known. God's love. And mercy. By your lives. Filled with patience. And kindness.

And self-control. God's plan. Is for you. To be his agent. Of justice. To stand up.

For the victims. Of violence. And injustice. To campaign. For them. To live. To live your life. In justice. That others.

Might be blessed. Through that. God's plan. For you. Is to be. God's agent. Of good news. To make Jesus. Known. To everyone.

[14 : 44] And for everyone. You are part. Of God's plan. To renew. And restore. All creation. God. Chooses. To work.

Together. With you. To identify you. As his co-worker. This is what it means. To live. As part of God's story.

However. God. And his sovereign. Gracious work. Is the main event. In the story of Noah.

God is the one. Who supremely. And powerfully. Achieves his plan. To save. Women and men. His plan. To renew. And restore. All things. Let's look at those verses.

Again. Verse 12. God saw. The earth. The God. Who had made. The eye. Can see. Perfectly. Well. He can see. What is being.

[15 : 43] Done. On the air. When we read. In scripture. Of God. Seeing. We always. Read of God. Acting. Because. Of what. He sees.

The non-God idols. Which we create. To please. Ourselves. Can do. Nothing. Because. They see. Nothing. They are useless. And worthless. God's plan. Includes. God's seeing. And knowing. He is. Always. God only. Wise. God knows. Better than. We do. How to save. How to restore. We trust.

In God's seeing. And acting. And then. God said. To Noah. I have determined. To make an end. Of all flesh. For the earth. Is filled.

[16 : 37] With violence. Through them. Behold. I will destroy. Them. With the earth. It is. Right. That we. Give thanks.

That our God. Is a God. Of judgment. When we see. Violence. On the earth. Are we not. Distressed. By this. Are we not.

Wounded. By the. The visions. We see. On the television. News. Are we not. Sometimes. Angered. By violence. Against. The weak.

The vulnerable. Do we not. Long. For an end. To the violence. Against women. And children. To the violence. Against creation. Why should we.

Not then. Depend upon. The good. And righteous. Judgment. Of our God. Our good. And gracious. God alone.

[17 : 32] Is wise enough. To judge. And to exercise. Judgment. Justly. And here. He tells Noah. He has determined.

To do it. God has. In Christ. Jesus. Judged. All human. Wickedness. The plan. Of God. Is not ever. To allow.

Any wickedness. To triumph. Jesus. Wins. The plan. Of God. Will not. Permit. Wickedness. To endure. The plan. Of God.

Nails it. To the cross. And puts it. To death. Our best. Plans. To achieve. Justice. Tinker.

At the ages. Our best. Efforts. To achieve. Justice. Are weakened. By injustice. In our own lives.

This is why.

[18 : 26] We depend. Upon our God. Who is. Perfectly. Just. To exercise. His judgment. To get right. To the heart.

Of the problem. God said. In verse 17. I will bring. A flood. Of waters. Upon the earth. There is never.

The slightest. Suggestion. That the flood. Happened. In some way. Apart from. The direct. Purpose. Of God. The same. God. Who we read. In chapters.

One and two. Set limits. For the waters. That they could not pass. The same. God. Removed.

Those limits. That the flood. Waters. Might cover. The air. How many times.

Do we know. What needs to be done. But we hold back. From doing it. Thank God. Our loving father. Does.

[19 : 22] What needs to be done. Don't you think. It would be terrible. If we went. To the doctor. And the doctor. Said. Well what you need. Is an operation.

And it's going to be. Really painful. And it's going to take you. Quite a lot of weeks. Of painful.

Recuperation. After the operation. And so. Because that all. Sounds painful.

I'm not going to do it. That would be awful. We need. Doctors. Who will do.

The operation. Even if it. Causes us. Pain. And time. For recovery. How much more.

Should we be grateful. To our divine physician. Who knows. Perfectly. The disease. Which afflicts us. Who alone. Knows. How to address.

[20 : 17] That disease. And who is. Willing. To do. What needs. To be done. For us. And our salvation. Yes.

We depend upon. The work of judgment. Embedded in God's plan. But we also depend upon. The grief. Released through God's plan. God said.

I will establish. My covenant with you. And you shall come into the ark. You and your sons. Your wife. Your sons. Wives with you. And of every living thing. And all flesh. Two of every sort. Into the ark.

They shall be kept alive. With you. God's plan. Is to make. A covenant. A binding commitment. From God. To us.

Notice. As God describes. His covenant here. He is the only one. Making a commitment. I will make a covenant. With you.

[21 : 17] He will be our God. And we shall be his people. God covenants. Towards us. That he himself. Will provide. A rescue for us.

What depth. Of insight. Led our mothers. And fathers. In faith. To see in the ark. A picture. A foretelling. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our saviour.

In the same way. As all that would be saved. From the flood. Was gathered into the ark. So all that will be saved. For eternity. Is gathered.

Into the cross. Of Christ. God is not. For any reason. Compelled.

To save Noah. God does not. Save. In the ark. Because it is his job. God.

[22 : 15] Freely. Out of sovereign grace. chooses. Chooses to enter into a covenant. Which expresses his desire. For you.

And your salvation. God does not save you. Because it is his job. In the freedom of his love. God seems a rescue.

In the power of his grace. God catches you up. In the strong arms of Jesus. God's plan. God's plan. God's plan. To save all. Who will be saved.

Through the cross. And resurrection. Of our saviour Jesus. Is not. A new plan. God didn't think it up. When Jesus was born. In Bethlehem.

