

# Introduction

The purpose of this study is to increase our view of God. Oftentimes, we believe He is limited by our faithfulness, our obedience, our circumstances. In this study, we will see that nothing hinders God from His purpose in creating the universe—to make Himself known by establishing a flourishing relationship with humanity on the individual and corporate level. Through this study, we will seek to have our view of God shaped by His revelation of Himself in Scripture as opposed to worldly, cultural, or personal perspectives.

This study is broken down into six major themes: God’s Eternal Plan, His Heart, Creation and the Fall, Man’s Ineptitude, God’s Persistence, and the Gospel.

These themes are highly related, and although the lessons seek to focus on a specific theme, there will often be overlap because one can’t understand God’s Eternal Plan of Redemption on the Basis of Grace without grasping His Heart for relationship with humanity.

These themes throughout this study are foundational as we continue to relate to God and understand His word, and much of the content within is based on FBC Global Missions’ *Knowing God*. If you are interested in gaining a deeper grasp of these themes, a member of the Global Missions team would be pleased to go through the entire study with you.

# Lesson 1

## God's Eternal Plan: The Meta-Narrative Context

As we all know, this world is probably filled with as many different worldviews as there are different races and ethnicities of people. When we talk about someone's worldview, we mean the fundamental orientation of their lives—the center of their belief system that determines their values, beliefs, and outward actions.

It's probably safe to say that for the majority of the world, it's the religion they follow that determines their worldview and in turn determines their values, beliefs, and outward actions.

Among us as Christians, we can also have varying Christian worldviews that are shaped by our view of God and what we think the Christian life is all about. Our view of Who God is, what God is like, and what we think is most important to Him will greatly shape what we believe He expects of us. This will significantly determine our goals and purposes for living the Christian life, as well as how we seek to fulfill those goals and purposes. What we believe about God in terms of Who He is and what is important to Him will also affect our interpretation of God's word and how we seek to apply it to our lives.

As Christians, we can have a “Man-centered Christian Worldview” or we can have a “God-

centered Christian Worldview.” It’s safe to assume that the majority of Christianity is preaching and following a man-centered Christian worldview, but we are after a “God-centered Christian Worldview.”

### ***Obtaining a Proper Christian Worldview***

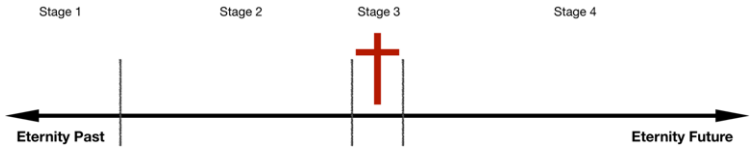
In order for us to obtain a proper Christian worldview that consists of accurate views of God, Who He is, what He is like, what is important to Him, and what He expects of mankind (both as unbelievers and believers), it’s extremely important for us to understand that there is a God-centered or God-directed context that this world exists in. We call this God-directed context, “The Meta-Narrative Context,” which means “The Grand Story,” “The Big Picture.”

We are saying that there is a big picture context, a grand story context that begins with God Himself, is directed and determined by God, and ends with the fulfillment of all of His plans and purposes.

From the word of God, we can see that God has revealed that there are four main stages to His directed Grand Story:

- Stage 1 – “The Planning Stage”
- Stage 2 – “The Preparation Stage”
- Stage 3 – “The Fulfillment Stage”
- Stage 4 – “The Results of the Fulfilled Plan Stage”

## The Meta-Narrative Context



### ***Beginning the Context in the Right Place***

Like any story, to understand the context of the story you cannot begin in the middle. You cannot start at the end, then jump to the beginning, then jump to the middle in some random order. You must begin at the beginning and follow the whole story through in sequential order. The problem for most Christians, though, is that they begin their view of the Christian context at the wrong place. When that happens, you will be led to many wrong views about God, what He is like, and what is important to Him.

- *Example: Explain what happens to your perspective of God, what He expects of mankind, and how many OT stories will be interpreted when you begin your context in Genesis 1.*

Most Christians begin their context in Genesis 1 with creation; but there are many passages of scripture that clearly show us that the context of our God-directed grand story begins with Himself, the Godhead, in eternity past before the foundations of the earth.

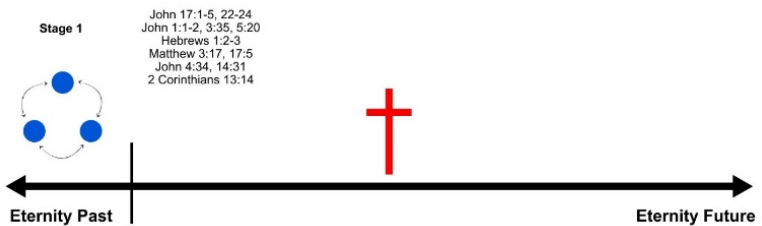
## Godhead's Eternality

1. *Genesis 1:1*
2. *Psalms 90:1-2*
3. *Psalms 102:12, 26-27*
4. *Isaiah 40:28*
5. *Revelation 1:8; 22:13*

## Godhead's Relationship

1. *John 17:4-5, 20-26*
2. *1 John 4:8*

### Stage 1 - The Planning Stage



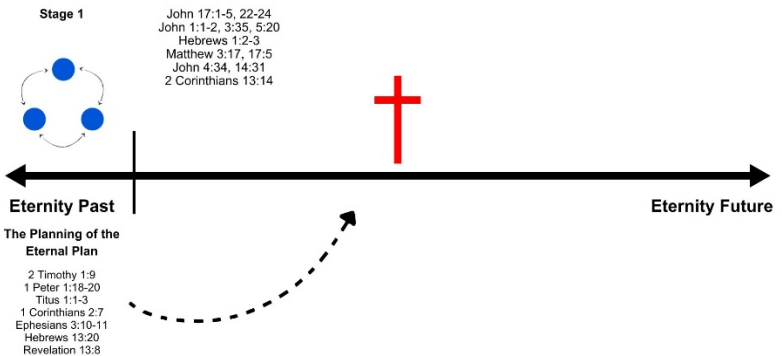
### *The Planning of the Eternal Plan of Redemption*

It's out of these factual realities of who the Godhead is and what Their relationships were like from eternity past that the God-directed grand story flowed out of. Because of Who God is and what He is like, the Godhead was moved to create a Grand Plan, an Eternal Plan that would become the ultimate manifestation of His love, grace, and wisdom.

## ***Stage 1 – The Planning of the Eternal Plan***

1. *2 Timothy 1:9*
2. *1 Peter 1:18-20*
3. *Titus 1:1-3*
4. *1 Corinthians 2:7*
5. *Ephesians 3:10-11*
6. *Hebrews 13:20*
7. *Revelation 13:8*

### **Stage 1 - The Planning Stage**



Putting all of these passages together with the passages above regarding the eternity and relationship of the Godhead, we can clearly see that before God spoke the world and all that it contains into existence, He first predetermined an eternal plan of redemption that would ultimately lead to bringing a fallen human race into the same oneness, intimacy, and love that the Godhead has been experiencing from eternity past. This would be accomplished by grace and through Christ.

God's eternal plan of redemption began in His heart, in eternity past, so we know that it was not a reaction to Adam and Eve's sin. For mankind to be redeemed, they needed to be in a place to be redeemed from; this was all part of God's plan that came from His loving relational heart. It was never to be based on the faithfulness of mankind but only based on the faithfulness and predetermined plan of God. In fact, God was planning on man's unfaithfulness and sin and not their faithfulness and obedience.

### ***Stage 2 – Preparation for the Eternal Plan's Fulfillment***

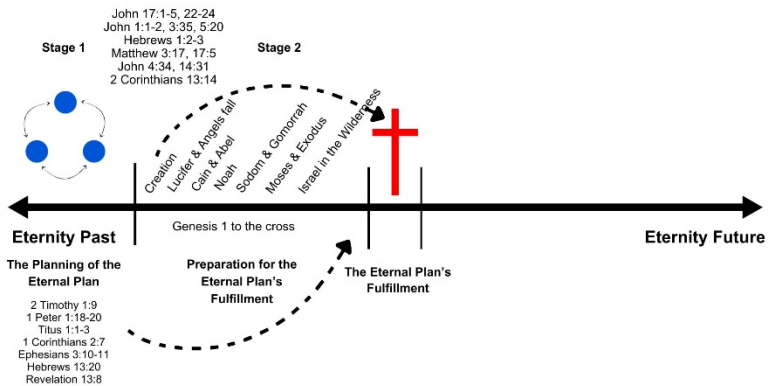
In between the Godhead planning for the Eternal Plan in Stage 1 and Jesus coming and fulfilling it in Stage 3, a whole host of things needed to be brought into being, the first of which was the world and all that it contains. So, the first thing God does in the preparation stage is to create the place where the eternal plan will be carried out and the ones for whom it will be carried out.

Very quickly, sin enters the world through Lucifer and his followers' rebellion, and then we also have the fall of mankind when Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Hence, now we have the need for the fulfillment of God's eternal plan of redemption.

As we continue through the Old Testament to the death of Christ, God is working to show mankind their need for the coming deliver. God is not trying to get mankind to be faithful and obedient. He is not

trying to get the Nation of Israel to do the right thing, but He is trying to get them to see their need for Him and rest in His relationship with them and trust in His plan for the coming deliverance and redemption. When we begin to look at each OT story within the context of God's directed grand story, we will begin to see them all from a different perspective.

## Stage 2 - Preparation for the Eternal Plan's Fulfillment



1. *Adam and Eve's sin – showing them they need God and preparing them for redemption*
2. *Abel's murder – showing him his need for God and preparing him for redemption*
3. *Noah's time – showing the people their need for God and preparing for redemption*
4. *Babel – using their sin to set up the world with every tongue, tribe, and nation.*
5. *Abraham – manifesting that it's all about God and His purposes and who HE wants to use in His plan*

6. *Moses and Israel in slavery in Egypt – showing a very clear physical picture of spiritual truth*
7. *Giving the Law – proving mankind’s sinfulness and need for the fulfillment of God’s eternal plan of redemption*
8. *Building the Tabernacle and all of its furnishings and sacrifices – demonstrating pictures of the Deliverer and the redemption that He will provide*
9. *Sodom and Gomorrah – proving that mankind had become exactly what God knew they would become*

God uses all these accounts to show people their need for the coming Deliverer. God is wanting them to trust in relationship with Him and the redemption that He is bringing.

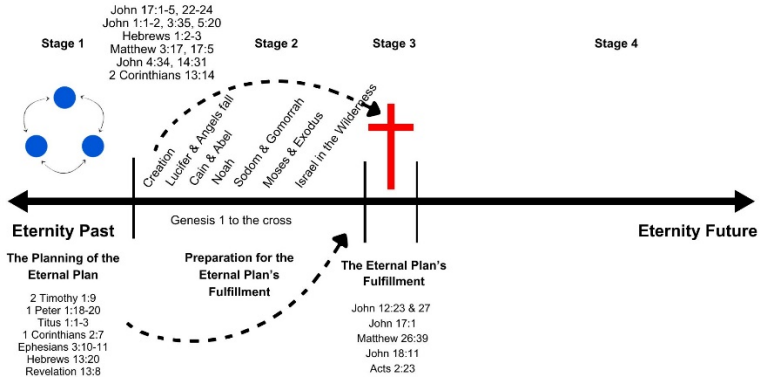
### ***Stage 3 – The Eternal Plan’s Fulfillment***

Picture the excitement when a husband and wife are expecting a baby soon to be born. This is what it was like when the time came for Jesus to be crucified on the cross. Certainly, it was painful for both the Father and the Son for they had such a deep and wonderful relationship that had continued from eternity past. In the garden, Jesus asked if it be possible, that maybe there could be another way, showing the reality of the pain. Ultimately, though, He didn’t want His own way but His Father’s way, and this led to God turning His back on His Son Jesus while on the cross.

It’s our sinfulness that separates us from God. So, when the sin of the world was placed on Jesus as our

substitute on the cross, the fact that it caused God to have to separate and turn away from the Son was proof that ALL of our sin was genuinely placed on Him. Even though this separation was a truly painful process for God the Father and God the Son, they both knew that this RELATIONAL plan of REDEMPTION was the way they had planned it in eternity past (*Acts 2:23*). The fulfillment of God's plan came at the exact hour that God had planned.

### Stage 3 - The Eternal Plan's Fulfillment



1. *John 12:23, 27*
2. *John 17:1*
3. *Matthew 26:39*
4. *John 18:11*

God had fulfilled His eternal plan and certainly it was painful, but what a glorious day it was because now God could enter into eternal RELATIONSHIP those who believe in Him.

#### ***Stage 4 – Results of the Fulfilled Plan***

Immediately following Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, His fulfillment of the eternal plan of redemption, every event, promise, doctrine, command, and all instruction that we find in the word of God between Acts 1 and Revelation 22, ALL finds its relevance in the fact that Jesus fulfilled the eternal plan of redemption (that the Godhead had predetermined from eternity past). Take away the fact of His fulfillment and it all becomes irrelevant, untrue, and impossible.

Remember how we said in stages one and two that none of it was dependent on the faithfulness of mankind but solely on the faithfulness of God? The same is true with this fourth and final stage. ALL the results of Jesus fulfilling the plan are based on the faithfulness of God and not on the faithfulness of mankind or believers. This is exactly why we said it's so important that we begin our context at the right place and obtain a correct perspective of God and His expectations of mankind through the OT. That will enable us to now have a correct perspective of God, His expectations of us, and all that we have received as the result of receiving eternal salvation.

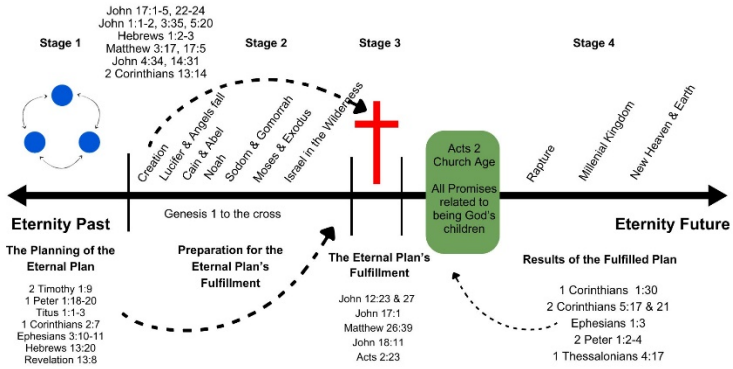
God's eternal heart of love and showing itself in RELATIONSHIP and leading to the REDEMPTION of mankind brings with it all kinds of eternal results and benefits. Let's mention just a few for starters.

1. *1 Corinthians 1:30 – We have been placed into Christ Jesus.*
2. *2 Corinthians 5:17 and 21 – We are new creations and have been declared righteous. (Note: Adam’s righteousness was the absence of sin. Our righteousness is Jesus Himself).*
3. *Ephesians 1:3 – We have been made accepted in the beloved.*
4. *2 Peter 1:2-4 – We have been given everything pertaining to life and godliness.*
5. *Ephesians 1:11 and 1 Peter 1:3-5 – God has predestined for us an eternal inheritance that is reserved in heaven by His divine power.*
6. *1 Thessalonians 4:17 – We will spend eternity with Him in the new heavens and the new earth.*

Again, these are results of the fulfillment of God’s eternal plan. He wants us to walk in dependency upon Him, confident of His love, enjoying intimacy, fellowship and relationship with Him, which has been His plan from before the foundations of the earth.

He PLANNED it, He PREPARED all things for its fulfillment, He FULFILLED it, and He produced all the RESULTS from its fulfillment. It’s ALL of Him.

## Stage 4 - Results of the Fulfilled Plan



*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! "For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?" "Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?" For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.*

***Romans 11:33-36***