

Lesson 2

God's Eternal Plan: His Attributes

Introduction: Throughout the course of this teaching, one of the main things we will see over and over is the fact that it is God Himself Who is carrying out His eternal plan of redemption. It was He who determined it before the foundations of the earth and it's been He Who has been carrying it out and fulfilling it through Christ on the behalf of mankind and for His glory. God left nothing for mankind to figure out on their own. It was He Who first determined His eternal plan of redemption before mankind even existed and since creation, He has gone to great lengths to faithfully communicate Who He is, what He is like, what He is doing, Who the Deliver is, and how mankind can be delivered.

- Verses proving that statement are 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:19-20; and 1 Corinthians 2:6-7.

Discussion: Remember, God created the eternal plan of redemption before mankind even existed.

1. What does that reveal to us about God?
2. What does it reveal to us about what His heart is like?
3. What does it reveal to us about what He expects from mankind?
4. What does it reveal to us about the specifics of the eternal plan of redemption?

We can begin to understand the “why” of God’s plan when we look at “who” He is. Before time began, God was. He is eternal. He is outside of time and unaffected by it, as He has created it. Before time began, God also intended to come to the earth Himself to purchase redemption through his blood. He always intended to bring us into a deeper relationship than that of the garden, knowing that men would sin with their free will, breaking the relationship of the garden. Christ was not the backup plan for *if* man sinned. He was the solution for *when* man sinned.

Discussion: How would the eternal plan of redemption bring mankind into a deeper relationship with God than what Adam was experiencing in the garden before the fall?

- **Read Genesis 1:1.**

Before the beginning, before there was anything, there was God! God already existed. I love how the Bible begins with God already existing. There is no argument or proof given for His existence.

There was never a time when God didn’t yet exist (try wrapping your mind around that). See **Psalm 90:2**. There was never a time when God did not exist, and there will never be a time when He ceases to exist.

God is ETERNAL! God is eternal and He existed before there was any creation. Therefore, we know that He is also completely independent of everyone

and everything. He doesn't need air to breathe, food to eat, water to drink, nighttime to sleep, light, time or space.

The eternity of God is extremely significant for us as believers today, for not only is God Himself eternal, but also this means that all of His attributes are eternal as well:

- He will always be holy.
- He will always love us.
- He will always be merciful.
- He will always bestow His grace upon us.
- He will always be omnipotent.
- He will always be omnipresent.
- He will always be omniscient.
- He will always be immutable or unchangeable.

Discussion: Remember these facts about God's attributes being eternal.

1. Name some ways in which this is significant for our daily lives today.
2. Are the facts of God's eternity significant in terms of the other members of the godhead and their roles?

Not only is God the Father eternal, but so is God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The fact of Jesus' eternity is very important for us, too! For it is upon His finished work that God's acceptance of us is founded.

Because Christ and His finished work satisfy God's justice for all eternity means that our relationship with God and His acceptance of us will be eternal as well. The fact that the Holy Spirit is eternal means that He will be faithful to carry out His role and ministry in our lives throughout eternity. Currently, while we are still on this earth, His role is to lead us into truth and make Christ the occupation of our hearts. We can absolutely expect Him to always be faithful, because He is eternal.

God is self-existent. He exists by His own power. He is the source of all power and all life. We humans are the exact opposite. We are extremely dependent upon other people and other things. Without parents, we wouldn't have entered the world, and without their care, we never would have lived past our first 48 hours. Without air, food, and water, we would die off quickly. How long could we function without sleep? Without the sun's ultraviolet rays? The ways in which we are dependent are too numerous to count, but God does not need a single thing!

Discussion: Remember, God is self-existent and is the source of ALL power and ALL life.

How is that fact significant for us today?

- a. *Answer: Everything in our lives that we desire or want to go the way that we want it to comes with uncertainty and great potential for its hindrance. How often do we make plans for something only to have something come up and prevent them from happening?*
- b. *Will we ever have to worry about God no longer loving us? **Romans 8:31-39***

- c. *Will we ever have to worry about God leaving us? **Hebrews 13:5***
- d. *Will we ever have to worry about God no longer caring about us? **1 Peter 5:7***
- e. *Will we ever have to worry that we may not receive what God has promised? **1 Peter 1:3-5***

Can you feel your perspective on life and your daily circumstances beginning to change yet? So far, I haven't said anything that we don't already know to be true, but bringing our attention back to the sovereignty and supremacy of God suddenly overshadows our worries and concerns.

Because God alone existed before everything and everyone else, He is greater than all.

God is greater than any force in the whole universe. He is greater than everyone and everything, even the spirit world. There can never be any person or any power that is superior to God. He is the supreme authority. The entire universe and everything in it, including all spiritual powers, are subject to God's authority and are completely DEPENDENT on Him.

We all know and have no doubt that God is greater than us, the animals, and the angels, but what about in our view of Satan? Is there really a battle going on between God and Satan? Scripture speaks of a battle going on within us between the flesh and spirit. Satan walks around as a roaring lion seeking someone to devour, seeking someone to deceive. But from God's

perspective, is there really a battle going on between God and Satan? NO, Satan is already a defeated foe.

Discussion: In support for what is stated above, discuss the significance of Colossians 1:16 and what it means regarding God's relationship to Satan and the spirit world.

- **Other facts to keep in mind about Satan:**
 - God created him as Lucifer and he tried to become God. Not only was he not able to become God, but he wasn't even able to remain as Lucifer. He became Satan by the sovereign and holy judgment of God, not through his own will and purposes.
 - **Isaiah 14:13** shows that God knew what was taking place in Lucifer's heart when it said, "but you said in your heart." Nothing can be kept secret from God. Nothing can surprise God. He knows everything even before it happens. God is everywhere, sees everything, and knows everything. God is so ALL-KNOWING that all of this has been a part of His plan from before time began!
 - **Matthew 25:41** – The lake of fire was created for the devil and his angels. The appropriate time for God's fulfilling of the judgment is yet to come. **Revelation 20:7-10**
 - Satan is a creature, superhuman but not divine; he has much knowledge and power, but he is neither omniscient nor omnipotent. He can move around in ways that humans cannot, but he is not omnipresent; and he is an already defeated

rebel, having no more power than God allows him and is destined for the lake of fire.

- Regarding Lucifer's rebellion, it wasn't just a matter of God NOT allowing Lucifer to take His position. Rather, it would have been IMPOSSIBLE for him to take it. A created being could never become God! God is the "great I AM," the self-existent one Who existed from all eternity in majesty and completeness before anything was created. He lives by His own power, and He gives life to everything. He is absolutely sovereign and supreme! No one gave Him this position! It's who He is!

- **Read Psalm 147:1-9; 148:1-13.**

There is no one and nothing that can be compared with God. He is far greater than everything and everyone. He is beyond our understanding.

- We can't comprehend One who had no beginning and will have no end.
- It's hard to fathom One who is never in need of anything.
- One who sees everything, but, because He is spirit, can't be seen by anyone.
- How He can reside in heaven and yet be everywhere all at the same time.
- The three persons are the one God. Very hard to understand. God surpasses all knowledge.

We refer to God's infinite superiority as His sovereignty. Webster's definition is, "ruler, supreme in power, chief, efficacious or effective in the highest degree." In reflecting God's sovereignty, the Bible often calls God "the Most High. . ."

- . . . "the Most High over all the earth" (**Psalm 83:18**)
- . . . "I am the Lord, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me." (**Isaiah 45:5**)
- . . . "Our God is in heaven, He does whatever He pleases." (**Psalm 115:3**)
- . . . "Yes, I know the LORD is great, and our Lord is superior to all gods. He does whatever he pleases in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all the ocean depths. (**Psalm 135:5-6**)

Discussion: Remember, He does whatever He pleases. Whatever the Lord pleases He does, in heaven and in earth.

1. What has the Lord been pleased to do?

a. Colossians 1:19-20—*For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.*

b. Ephesians 1:5—*having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.*

- c. **Ephesians 1:11**—*In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.*
- d. **1 Corinthians 2:7**—*But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, even the wisdom that hath been hidden, which God foreordained before the worlds unto our glory.*
- e. **Acts 2:23**—*Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death.*

2. When you put all these verses together, what does it mean for us today? All that we have been given by God through Christ, God did NOT do reluctantly! It was His sovereign will! He did these things according to the purposes of His own heart! This speaks of His desire for us!

Because God is outside of time (Eternal) and above all (Sovereign), He knows all things.

As “The Most High” having created the world, God has the authority to tell us how it began. He also has the authority to do what He wants with the creation (**Psalm 50:10-11**). Fortunately, His purposes are not for evil, as we will see in the next lesson. Knowing everything, He is not ignorant to the evil in the world. He knew about the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide, the Khmer Rouge before they happened. If He did not, He would not be God, for there would be a knowledge above Him, and God would no longer be “The Most High.”

He knows the heart of men (Jeremiah 17:10) and is not surprised by what he finds. He is not caught off guard because that would imply a lack of knowledge. But God knows all things. Before Adam and Eve sinned, God already knew it. Before He created them, God had already planned for a Deliverer to come.

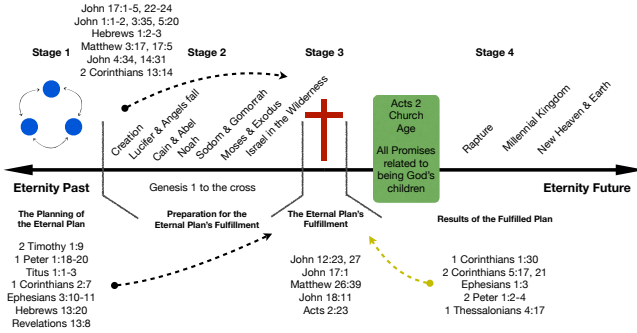
- **Read 1 Peter 1:18-20.**

Discussion: Remember, God is all-knowing and knows every thought, intent, and action of ours before we ever think or carry it out.

- Name some ways in which this is significant for us today.

Having established the fact of God's plan and purpose that existed in His heart from before time began, as we approach Genesis Chapter 1 then, we must see it as the beginning of God carrying out His plan—a plan and purpose that included grace being bestowed upon us through Christ our Savior and Deliverer. Keeping these facts in mind will help set the context for all the Old Testament, the New Testament, and our current circumstances.

The Meta-Narrative Context



- **Read Genesis 3:15.**

After Adam and Eve sin, God promises a Deliverer. That's what it looks like to us. But it isn't an "after thought" to God's original plan, for He had already planned to send someone who would "crush the serpent's head." If we center ourselves on who God is, allowing that to shape our worldview and interpret Scripture, there is no way we would think that God is responding to our sinfulness with this promise.

God's carrying out of His plan of redemption is not reactionary, i.e., it's not "Plan B." Nor is He gracious toward us "in spite" of our sin. He is gracious toward us BECAUSE of our sin and because He is love (**1 John 4:8**), and it's absolutely impossible for man to do anything to help himself. This is a pattern you see all the way through the whole Word of God.

Discussion: Name some of the stories/events in the Bible that stand for us today as examples of first,

mankind can do nothing to help himself, and second, only God can provide a way of deliverance.

1. What would have happened to Adam and Eve and the whole human race had God just created them perfect and upright and then left them on their own to deal with the consequences of their own decisions? **Eternal death—never to be restored again.**
2. What would have happened with Noah? **The whole human race would have been wiped out.**
3. How did the Nation of Israel (line of the Deliverer) come into being? **By God choosing an idol worshipper with a barren wife to bring about a new race!**
4. What would have happened to Lot in Sodom? **The angels had to take him by the hand and make him leave!**
5. What would have happened to Israel in Egypt? What would have happened to Israel in the wilderness? What about Israel's condition during the times of their judges and kings? **They were forever turning away from God to worship idols, and God was forever intervening.**
6. What would have happened to the Deliverer? What would have happened to the disciples? What would have happened to the early church and its growth?

7. Where would we be today? Name one thing that was significant in bringing us to where we are today as God's children, that could have happened without God's divine intervention.
You can't!

Praise God that the plan of redemption was in His hands – Humanity killed His Deliverer! If this plan of redemption were anyone else's, it would have failed. The only thing that man brings to the table is his brokenness. God is sturdy; we are fragile. God is sure; we are confused. God can do it because He is the Most High in every sense – in strength, authority, and knowledge. Not only does He have the ability, but He also has the right.

Discussion: In conclusion, let's discuss how God's exclusive attributes contribute to the fulfilling of His eternal plan of redemption.

1. Because God is **sovereign**, He is the one **completing** this plan.
2. Because God is **omniscient**, He planned for man's rebellion. He knew man would sin and be unable to **reconcile** the relationship. Therefore, He planned to send a deliverer from this situation of **despair**.
3. Because God is **omnipotent**, only He is powerful enough to accomplish the **redemption** of His creation.

4. Because God is **eternal**, He planned this **before** He spoke “let there be light.”
5. Because God is **love**, He accomplished it **pursuing** a relationship with humanity.
6. Because God is **holy** and **worthy**, He did it for the praise of the glory of His grace.

Humans display this nature in miniature, as we are all created in the image of God. Humans have power and knowledge; they can exert power and express sacrificial love. These are mere whispers of God’s nature, but they speak of it nonetheless. God’s eternal plan of redemption was passed down through generations of Israelites. Throughout the Old Testament, all the people knew was that a Deliverer was coming. What He would actually do, provide, and how He would affect His followers was kept as a mystery by God until the appointed time.

It’s plain to see that the “mystery,” or that which has been kept a mystery, has been the details of God’s plans and purposes that would be accomplished through Christ—the eternal plan of redemption. Again, not so much that He was coming, but the details of what He would accomplish. More specifically, it’s the “mystery of being in Him,” in Christ, the “identification truths.” See **Colossians 1:26-27**.

Peter’s second epistle states that we have absolutely received everything needed for the receiving of eternal life and godly living.

- **Read 2 Peter 1:2-4.**

It is God's divine power manifested through the finished work of Christ that has granted us ALL THINGS pertaining to life and godliness. This refers to both our position and our condition. Position in the sense that it's pertaining to "life," eternal life. The moment we accepted Christ as our Savior, that very moment we were made alive. We were dead to God but are now alive unto God. It's the truth regarding our position that makes our condition possible. Peter also refers to our condition, then, in the sense that Peter says it pertains to "godliness," godly living, or being God-like.

God's attributes are His Nature – "Who" God is. Who He is feeds the "why" of what He does, His character, or how God relates to us. The "who" of a mother – her nature as a female, a caretaker, and one who gave birth – leads to the "why" of what she does – the sleepless nights and years of sacrifice. So, the same with God. Who He is flows into what He does. Next week, we will look at the "why" of God – His heart. What motivates Him?

We've seen in this lesson that God, being all-knowing, all-good, and all-powerful, could not have been caught off guard by humanity's rebellion, could not have let humanity rot away in its own sin, and could not leave redemption in anyone's hands but His own. Therefore, sending Jesus was not Plan B for if humans sinned. Jesus was Plan A from the beginning.

To go deeper into this topic, read through Lessons 2 and 8 in the full Knowing God curriculum.