

“God's Eternal Plan” (Revelation 22:20, Genesis 1:1)

We will start a new series “Living in the in-between.” We are living in the unique period, which is the time after Jesus’s cross and resurrection, and before his second coming.

We just finished the series, “The Call to Undivided Intimacy.” We closely looked at the Ten Commandments. As God redeemed us from both guilt and bondage of sin, God is now calling us to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever. God is calling us to the undivided intimacy with him, and that relationship is reflected in all kinds of other relationships in our everyday lives, in your homes, in your work places, with friends, neighbors, and whoever.

In this series of “Living in the in-between” we will look at the meaning of our lives from the perspective of God’s eternal plan, and we will learn some of the key Biblical concepts which guide our lives meaningfully, effectively and fruitfully as we live in the in-between.

Today is the introduction, we will go through whole Bible to see “God’s Eternal Plan.”

1. The plan of the sovereign God

Revelation 21:1-2

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

This talks about the completed picture of God’s plan. Here, “a bride beautifully dressed for her husband” is mentioned. The husband is Christ Jesus, and the bride is the church (Rev 21:9). Actually this marriage relationship will never end, because Christ Jesus is Alfa and Omega, Eternal one, and the church has been given eternal life.

God is Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Triune God has perfect unity, harmony and love relationship within Him. The Church, the universal Church, the whole assembly of Christians, is going to be welcomed into that perfect unity, harmony and love relationship for eternity. This is the plan of

the sovereign God, and humans need to respond to Him because it is the love relationship between bride and groom.

And the very center of the main point is, in this perfect relationship, the glory of God will be perfectly manifested. This will never disappear. This will never fade. On the contrary, this will last forever and become even richer, deeper and fuller. This is God's plan.

2. Beginning

For this goal, the glory of God will be perfectly manifested forever, God began to work His eternal plan.

Genesis 1:1-2

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

God created everything from nothing. God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good (Gen 1:31). "The world" is the "arena" where God created for his glory, and where he will enjoy relationship with humans.

In the image of God He created humans. God created humans as His partners of His work and created them to have relationship with them (Gen 1:26-27).

How did God create the heavens and the earth? Genesis 1:3, God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. We can see the same pattern in vv.6-7, 9, 11, 14-15, 24, 29-30. When God said something, it happened, it became real. That is the power of the word of God.

However, when God spoke to man, He used his Word in order to communicate with man (Gen 2:16-17).

Now, let's look at Genesis 3:9, "But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" We can see clearly that God called man. Genesis 3:11, "And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" God was communicating with man. So it's very clear that God created man to have relationship with him.

3. Fall

God created the world and humans. All His creation glorified him. There was perfect, close relationship between God and man. However, that relationship was damaged. Man denied God's Word and disobeyed Him. Sin came into man. And the creation began to decay (Rom 8:21).

Man began to avoid seeing God, and hide themselves from God (Gen 3:8). Man lost the relationship with God. The world where God created to show his glory, now became the hard place for human's living. Man lost the abundant life and peace (Gen 3:23).

It seemed as if God's eternal plan had failed right from the beginning. But, the fact is, God has been working to fulfill His purpose, and His plan will surely come to pass, as the book of Revelation shows.

4. God's covenant and human failure

God chose Abraham by God's sovereignty, and made a covenant with him.

Genesis 12:1-3

The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

This is God's covenant spoken to Abraham. 1) I will make you into a great nation, 2) you will be a blessing. 3) all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

That was spoken to Isaac, the son of Abraham also.

Genesis 26:24

"That night the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham."

And, the same message was also spoken to Jacob, the son of Isaac.

Genesis 28:13-14

There above it stood the Lord, and he said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring."

Then, the next generation is Joseph. He became a prime minister of Egypt (Gen 41:43-44). The land of Egypt was famished, and the famine spread all over the face of the earth. All the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph (Gen 41:57).

It looked as if God's covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 had come true. But after Joseph's death, the descendants of Jacob, people of Israel became slaves of Egypt. Has God's eternal plan finished here? No. The fact is, God has been working to fulfill His purpose, and His plan will surely come to pass, as the book of Revelation shows.

God chose Moses to bring Israelites out of Egypt. As Israelites escaped from Egypt, the Egyptian army chased them down from behind. And before them was the Red Sea. There was no way to advance nor return. They were in a real pinch.

God divided the waters and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. After Israelites finished crossing the Red Sea, Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and the waters flowed back over the Egyptian army.

By the power of God, Israelites were completely set free from Egypt. Salvation is God's work, and man receives it by faith. And the faith is completed by man's action.

God chose Moses to lead Israelite into Canaan, the promise land. Israelites started to occupy the land under the leadership of Joshua.

Joshua 23:3

You yourselves have seen everything the Lord your God has done to all these nations for your sake; it was the Lord your God who fought for you.

All the victory is from the Lord.

Then later, God chose David and made him king over Israel. Israel had become a kingdom (2 Sam.5:1-5). And in his son, Solomon's time, the kingdom of Israel thrived to its peak.

1 Kings 10:21, 23-24

All King Solomon's goblets were gold, and all the household articles in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. Nothing was made of silver, because silver was considered of little value in Solomon's days.

²³ King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. ²⁴ The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart.

All riches, prosperity, wisdom and peace are from God.

It looked as if God's covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 had come true. But after the death of Solomon, the kingdom was divided in two. And moreover, Northern Kingdom, Israel was exiled to Assyria (BC722), and Southern Kingdom, Judah was exiled to Babylon (BC586).

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2 Chronicles 36:22-23

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing:

"This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: " 'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you-may the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up.' "

This restoration is the manifestation of God's rule and authority.

God chose Ezra and Nehemiah, and under their leadership, the Temple of God was rebuilt. However, as time went by, the people's faith had become mere forms of religion (Mark7:8, 13). The house of God should be a house of prayer, but it had become a den of robbers (Mark11:17).

But, God has been working to fulfill His purpose, and His plan will surely come to pass, as we see in the book of Revelation.

5. The Time Came

Lurk 2:11-12

Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

This is the sign. He is Savior, Christ and the Lord. That is Jesus. He has completed His work of redemption once for all (Heb 9:12, 26).

Those who believe in Christ are Abraham's seed and heirs of promised blessings. Moreover, all the people on the earth will be blessed through them (Gal 3:29).

And Jesus brought the kingdom of God to people.

Luke 11:20

But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.

Luke 17:20-21

Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."

The kingdom of God is already within us. We are already in the kingdom of God. But the kingdom is not completed yet. It will be completed when Christ comes again (Matt 25:31).

That is, now we are living as God's kingdom people in the period after the completion of Christ's redemption and before the completion of God's kingdom.

We will experience God's salvation, liberation, healing, riches, prosperity and restoration, but it will be a little later that we can experience them in their

fullness, as completion.

6. The purpose of this unique time

What is the purpose of this unique period of time?

Ephesians 5:25-27

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Now is the time that Christ is preparing for Himself the Church, all assemble of Christians, in all glory as His bride.

God is Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Triune God has perfect unity, harmony and love relationship within Him. The Church, the universal Church, the whole assembly of Christians, is going to grow into maturity and come into that perfect unity, harmony and love relationship for eternity.

That is, remaining in the love of Christ is not just personal experience, but rather corporate experience as a church, the body of Christ. Or we may say that it is an experience each person will have as a member of a church, a part of His body.

In other words, the kingdom of God is community, the heaven is community. This community is not just God and you alone, rather all Christians throughout history will be gathering together before the God of Trinity (Rev 7:9). "A new depth of relationship will be possible among God's people. For in that fulfilled kingdom of love, peace, righteousness and joy glimpsed by Old Testament prophets and by New Testament writers will become reality."¹

As this is relationship, it will never happen automatically, but each Jesus' follower needs to respond to one another with love, forgiveness and care.

John 13:2-3

In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I

¹ Stephen H. Travis, *I Believe In The Second Coming of Jesus*, Hodder and Stoughton, p.179

am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

For Jesus' followers, now is the time during which the Church is waiting for the return of Christ, her groom (1 Thess 5:23, 3:11-13; Rev 22:17).

Revelation 22:20

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Today we started new series "Living in the in-between." We are living in the unique period, which is the time after Jesus's cross and resurrection, and before his second coming. And we looked at "God's Eternal Plan." This is the summary:

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In this perfect relationship, the glory of God will be perfectly manifested forever. This will last forever and become even richer, deeper and fuller. This is God's plan.

God created the world and humans. All His creation glorified him. At the beginning, there was perfect, close relationship between God and man. However, that relationship was damaged. Man denied God's Word and disobeyed Him. Sin came into man. And the creation began to decay (Rom 8:21).

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Christ came for our redemption. Now we are living as God's kingdom people in the in-between time after the completion of Christ's redemption and before the completion of God's kingdom. And we are waiting for Christ's return.

Next time we will focus on the three main themes of the Bible, which are Christ, the Kingdom of God, and the covenant.

For Lifenet groups and personal reflection

1. Talk one thing you learned from the series “The Call to Undivided Intimacy.” How does it affect your life?
2. We are living in the unique period of time. Talk about how unique our time is.
3. God uses his Word in order to communicate with human (Gen 2:16-17; 3:9-11). What is shown about God? What does it mean for you?
4. The Bible describes the history of human disobedience to God and of God’s faithfulness to his word. Talk one incident for each. How can it be applied to you? Have you experienced something like this?
5. The kingdom of God is community, the heaven is community. Talk about what you used to believe about the heaven. Describe the heaven as a community.