

The Plan

The Gospel Coalition Booklets

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Gospel-Centered Ministry *by D. A. Carson and Timothy Keller*

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The Church: God's New People *by Tim Savage*

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The Holy Spirit *by Kevin L. DeYoung*

Can We Know the Truth? *by Richard D. Phillips*

What Is the Gospel? *by Bryan Chapell*

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Some people have the idea that God had a marvelous plan for the world but that things went terribly wrong and God had to come up with a costly initiative to sort out the mess. This is not what the Bible teaches.

God is not like the government, responding to unforeseen circumstances and making adjustments for unintended consequences. He is not like a scientist, experimenting to see what works, or a business entrepreneur who succeeds by finding new ideas that respond to emerging needs.

Bringing sinners to eternal life through Christ has always been God's plan. God promised eternal life "before the beginning of time, and at his appointed season he brought his word to light" (Titus 1:2–3). Before he created the world, God saw the joy that would come from redeeming a vast company of sinners from every circumstance of life, every continent of the world, and every generation of history. And knowing the cost, he determined to do it.

This is why the Bible describes Christ as "the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). Christ's death on the cross was not something that God came up with in response to Satan's triumph in the garden of Eden or as a last resort when it became evident that men and women couldn't live up to the Ten Commandments. Redeeming sinners from all nations through Jesus Christ was God's plan from the beginning.

God's plan is very different from our plans. When I say, "I'll meet you for breakfast next Tuesday," I mean, "Assuming that I'm alive, that I have transportation, that I don't have some other emergency, and that the restaurant is open and serving breakfast, I will see you on Tuesday."

Our plans are contingent. They depend on how events unfold and whether we have the ability to bring them about. Many things in life are beyond our control.

But God is sovereign. He fulfills his own plan in his own time by his own power, and no one can stop him. God knows exactly what he is

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doing at every point in history in every nation of the world and through every event in your life.

This should be a great comfort to you. Nothing you have ever done has taken God by surprise. Nothing that has happened to you has caught him unaware. Nothing you do and nothing that happens to you can stop God from fulfilling his plan or even slow him down. That is what it means for God to be sovereign.

God knows exactly what he is doing. You can have confidence in knowing that the events of your life are not spinning out of control or settled by random chance but that they are in the hands of God, who plans for you in love. Christians find joy in knowing that God's plan will lead to the greatest possible display of his glory and the greatest possible joy for his people.

I invite you to join me on a whistle-stop tour through the Bible's storyline, where God reveals the splendor of his breathtaking purpose that sweeps from eternity past through the ages of human history into eternity future.

We begin with the Old Testament, where God lays out the blueprints for his plan. Then, in the Gospels, we look at how Jesus Christ achieves all that is needed for the plan to be accomplished. And finally we look at the New Testament letters and rejoice in how the Holy Spirit delivers all that God has promised and all that Christ has accomplished in the lives of all God's people.

God Makes a Promise: The Story of the Old Testament

God unfolds his plan through seven initiatives that are full of promise for all his people.

Creation

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). Try to imagine nothing. It's almost impossible! But before the creation there was nothing, except God. God created all things, and all things belong to him. "The earth is the LORD's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Ps. 24:1).

Take a fresh look at what God has created today. Look at the sky; it proclaims the work of God's hands. Listen to the birds; they testify to God's gentle care. Every snowflake bears witness to his majesty. Every