



God's
MASTER
PLAN



What is God's Master Plan?

OBJECTIVE: The objective of this lesson is to outline and explain the Master Plan of God as revealed in the Bible and to give the Bible's answers for questions like, "Why was the earth formed?" and "What is the purpose of life?"

OVERVIEW: First, we will establish what the plan is that God has for the earth and the people living on it. We will then explain in more detail exactly what this Master Plan means and how it involves you and me.

DOES GOD HAVE A MASTER PLAN?

This may seem like a foolish question - but many people in the world today feel that the earth and its people are heading nowhere. Some will tell us that planet earth is heading for total and utter destruction. But God has other plans. The Bible is a book about the earth - it starts with the story of the creation of the earth, it continues to describe the lives of men and women on the earth and concludes with a future vision of the earth. It therefore seems logical that God's Master Plan should focus on the earth. God does have a plan for the earth - He did not create the earth for it to be destroyed.

"For this is what the LORD says - He who created the heavens, He is God, He who fashioned and made the earth; He founded it; He did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited." (Isaiah 45:18)

WHAT IS GOD'S MASTER PLAN?

On a number of occasions God expresses clearly His intention for the earth. The words of Numbers 14:21 concisely summarise God's intention.

"But as truly as I live all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD"

Here God tells Moses that as truly as He is the living God, one day the whole earth will be filled with His glory.

The prophet Habakkuk adds a little more to the description of the plan:

“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.” (Habakkuk 2:14)

Just as there is no part of the sea where there is no water, in like manner, one day there will be no place on the earth where God’s glory is not found. What an exciting plan!

WHAT DOES THE MASTER PLAN MEAN?

What exactly is involved in this plan that God has for the earth? It seems simple enough, but what is the ‘glory of the LORD’ which is to fill the earth? To understand the answer to this question we turn to the Bible to find a definition of the glory of God.

Almost 3500 years ago, the prophet Moses, requested that God reveal His glory to him, (Exodus 33:18). Moses wanted to see the glory of the LORD. Moses may have expected to see flashing lights, thunders or even visions of God’s beautiful creation, but he saw nothing like that. Instead Moses heard a voice, which said:

“The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.” (Exodus 34:6)

This was God’s glory - His character, the very essence of what He is. God was telling Moses that His Glory is revealed through His compassion, grace, patience, love and faithfulness.

Having understood what is meant by the glory of the LORD we can now better understand the meaning of God’s Master Plan. God wants to fill the earth with His character. In other words, it is God’s plan to fill the earth with characteristics such as love, faithfulness, and grace as the waters cover the sea.

WHAT HAVE HUMANS GOT TO DO WITH THE PLAN?

Everything! Humans form an essential part of God’s Master Plan. Humans provide the vehicle through which God will fill the earth with His glory. Strictly speaking it is only humans who can truly reveal the glory of the LORD. The mountains, stars and other items of God’s natural creation, beautiful as they are, cannot fully reveal

God's character. A tree cannot show love, a mountain cannot show grace - they all lack the essential characteristic that gives humans the capacity to reveal God's character - free will.

We all have the freedom to determine our behaviour and to mould our characters. We have the ability to reveal the many wonderful characteristics of God. God wants us to use this gift to reveal His character in our lives. This is, in essence, the purpose of life (John 17:22).

HOW IS THE PLAN PROGRESSING?

At present, judging by the performance of men and women, the plan is not going too well. The fact is that none of us are able to fully reveal the character and glory of God and with no humans revealing God's glory, God cannot hope to achieve His plan. Paul the apostle confirms our dismal failures:

"For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23)

Clearly, without some intervention from God, the Master plan is destined for failure.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

The following references provide additional support for the issues raised above: Psalm 72:19, Isaiah 11:9, Isaiah 60:1-3

We have learned that:

- God has a Master Plan for the earth
- God's Master Plan is to fill the earth with His glory
- God's glory is revealed in His character
- Humans are the vehicles through which God will fill the earth with His glory
- The purpose of life is to develop the character of God
- Man has constantly failed to achieve this purpose and placed the Master Plan in jeopardy

What is God's Master Plan?

God's Master Plan is to fill the earth with His glory through men and women.

How will God's Master Plan be realized?

OBJECTIVE: The objective of this lesson is to explain how the Master Plan of God will become a reality. We will consider the promises made by God to men of faith many thousands of years ago. We will also look at the kingdom of God and explain why it is an essential part of God's Master Plan.

OVERVIEW: This lesson deals with God's method of realising the Master Plan. God has revealed His plan to men of faith through some special promises. We begin by looking at two of these special promises made to Abraham and David, then focus on the subject of these promises, Jesus Christ and God's future kingdom. This lesson concludes by explaining how the promises, Jesus Christ and the kingdom provide the solution to the realisation of God's Master Plan.

DOES GOD HAVE A PLAN TO GUARANTEE HIS MASTER PLAN?

From Lesson 1 we learned that God's Master Plan is to fill the earth with His glory (character). Humans are the means by which God can achieve this plan, but humans are constantly failing to live up to the character of God. Does that mean the plan will never be fulfilled? That would only be the case if man alone was in control. Thankfully, that is not the case - God is in control (Daniel 4:25) and He is determined to make sure the plan becomes a reality. God has revealed His solution to us through some special promises made thousands of years ago.

From the moment the first man and woman failed to live up to the purpose of life, by disobedience in the Garden of Eden, God set in motion a process to guarantee His Master Plan. God has revealed

this to men and women of faith through a series of promises. Like a jigsaw puzzle we can fit all the pieces together and get a full picture of God's solution.

WHAT ARE THE PROMISES?

To find the pieces of God's solution we must first turn to the promises of God. The promises are a series of agreements made between God and selected men and women of faith in the Bible. These promises are found in the Old Testament. We will briefly consider two of these promises which basically summarise the content of all the promises of God.

The first set of promises we will consider were made to Abraham, the father of the faithful. The promises are outlined in various passages in Genesis chapters 12 through 17. The following summarises three of the most important promises made to Abraham:

Promise of becoming a great nation with many descendants:

"..I will make you a great nation and I will bless you; and I will make your name great..."
(Genesis 12:1-3)

LAND &
PEOPLE

Promise of inheritance of a land forever, and a special seed: *"....all the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.."*
(Genesis 13:14-17)

Promise of everlasting possession of a land and father of many nations: (Genesis 17:1-9)

The promises made to Abraham spoke of the everlasting possession of a land (specifically the land of Canaan, modern day Israel) by Abraham and a great people which would be his descendants. They also make special mention of a seed through which people of the promise would be blessed.

The promises that God made to Abraham were repeated to his descendants Isaac and Jacob. (Genesis 26:1-5, 28:13-17).

The second set of promises, we will consider, were made to David, a king of Israel. These promises are found in 2 Samuel 7.

Promise of a seed who would rule on David's throne as king

KING

forever:

"..I will raise up your offspring to succeed you... and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever..." (2 Samuel 7:12-17)

Notice the occurrence of the word "seed" or "offspring" (NIV) once again. In this promise God tells David that one of his descendants will establish his throne forever. We know that David's throne was in Jerusalem (1 Kings 2:11). The promise tells us that this great king is to rule from Jerusalem forever. This promise gives us another piece of the jigsaw puzzle of God's solution.

WHAT DO THESE PROMISES MEAN?

If we put all the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle together that we have discovered, we find that the promises are concerned with the following:

1. The promise of a seed (descendant) of Abraham and David who is to be King forever on earth and through whom blessing will come.

2. The promise of possession of a special land forever.

3. The promise of many people inheriting this land forever.

The promises therefore concern a king, a land and a people - or in other words a Kingdom. The promises centre around the king of this kingdom or the seed. In Galatians 3:16, Paul tells us that Jesus Christ is the promised seed. Through the promises, God preached the kingdom and Jesus Christ to the men and women of faith. It is through this coming kingdom and the efforts of Jesus Christ, the king, that God will realise His Master Plan.

JESUS CHRIST, THE KINGDOM, AND THE MASTER PLAN

Let's put all the pieces together to get the full picture! Jesus Christ represents the solution to God's Master Plan, He is the key to the realisation of the plan. The promises of God centre around the promised seed which is to bring blessing on many people. Jesus

The Promises:
KING
LAND
PEOPLE

Christ is the only man who ever achieved the purpose of life, that is to have fully revealed the glory of the LORD in his life. John describes Jesus as the glory of God in John 1:14

“We have seen His glory ... the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14)

Jesus never sinned - he perfectly manifested God's character in his life on earth. For this reason he is the centre of God's Master Plan. Only through association with the death and resurrection of Jesus, in baptism, can we hope to reveal the glory of God (Romans 6:3-4). When Jesus ascended from the earth, the angels gave the disciples the following message:

“Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:11)

Their message was that Jesus was coming back to the earth. But why would Jesus want to return to this earth? Well, the promises spoke of the everlasting kingdom, and Jesus ruling on David's throne and none of these promises have been fulfilled (Hebrews 11:39). Jesus Christ is coming back to set up God's kingdom on earth, to rule as king from David's throne - Jerusalem. The purpose of the kingdom will be for Jesus to bring all men and women into subjection before God (1 Corinthians 15:22-28). In other words Jesus is going to rule until every man and woman perfectly reveals the glory of God. The kingdom will grow until it fills the whole earth (Daniel 2:34-35). At last the Master Plan will be a reality because the earth will be filled with the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea (Numbers 14:21). The kingdom and the rule of Jesus is the means by which the Master Plan will be realised.

WHAT WILL THE KINGDOM BE LIKE?

The Bible tells us a lot about the conditions that will exist during the reign of Jesus on earth. Not only will men and women begin to reveal more perfectly the character of God, as He first intended, but in addition, the results of this obedience will lead to a new creation.

Peter talks of it as a “new heavens and a new earth” (2 Peter 3:13), a time when the destruction and pollution of this world will be removed. The prophet Isaiah tells us that during the time of the

kingdom of God, the deserts will bloom with roses. His beautiful vision in Isaiah 35 describes the conditions of the kingdom. It will be a time of peace, prosperity and harmony (Isaiah 35). It will be a kingdom beyond our wildest imaginations (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). For this reason Jesus appealed to his disciples to make the kingdom of God the most important thing in their lives (Matthew 6:33).

WHERE WILL THE KINGDOM BE?

From the above it is clear that the Kingdom of God is going to be established on earth. The purpose of the kingdom is to ensure that the earth is one day filled with God's glory. It must therefore be an earthly kingdom. Jesus confirms this for us in his prayer given to the disciples:

"Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"
(Matthew 6:10)

We are told that the centre of this kingdom will be Jerusalem and that the law of God will flow from this place throughout the earth (Micah 4:1-2).

WHEN WILL THE KINGDOM COME?

Jesus made it very clear that no one knows the exact time of the coming of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 24:36). However the Bible does give us **signs** to look for that would signal the coming of the Kingdom.

These include: (Matthew 24, Luke 21, Mark 13)

- Wars
- Famine
- Earthquakes
- Return of Israel to their homeland

We have learned that:

- The promises represent God's solution to man's failure.
- The promises concern Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.

- Jesus Christ is the only man to perfectly reveal God's glory - he is the key to the solution.
- The Kingdom will be on earth and ruled over by Jesus Christ in Jerusalem.
- The Kingdom is the means by which the Master Plan will be realised.
- The coming Kingdom of God will completely revitalise the conditions in our earth.

How will God's Master Plan be realized?

God's Master Plan will be realized through the kingdom of God on earth.

Why do we need God's Master Plan?

OBJECTIVE: The objective of this lesson is to look at why we need God's Master Plan. We will consider the origin of sin and its effect on the nature of man and his destiny.

OVERVIEW: First, we will consider how sin entered the world, and then the effect this had on mankind. Next we will look at the destiny of sinful man. Finally we will see how it is possible for man to escape this destiny through God's Master Plan.

WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF SIN?

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.... And God saw everything he had made, and behold it was very good."
(Genesis 1:1,31)

God created man in his own image and commanded man to obey Him. Man, however, disobeyed; he went against God's law (1 John 3:4) and so sin entered into the world (Genesis 3:6-15, Romans 5:12). This created a division between God and man (Genesis 3:24). Man who was "very good" was now in a state of sin.

So sin entered the world in the very beginning, because of man's disobedience to God's commandments.

WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF SIN ON MAN?

Man is essentially made up of a body and a mind. By sinning, man affected both his body and his mind and his relationship with God.

The Body

There are severe physical consequences of sin - we suffer sickness, pain, and ultimately death, after a short approximately 70 year life span. (Genesis 3:16-19, Psalm 90:10). We are therefore destined to die.

The Mind

The spiritual consequences are that we are morally impure. For *“from within, out of men’s hearts come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery...”* (Mark 7:21-23, Romans 1:28-32, Romans 5:17-21). We now have a fleshly mind - a mind that is against God (Romans 8:6-7); a mind in which a constant battle rages between doing good and doing evil (Romans 7:18-19).

God

As a result of the sin in Eden the relationship between God and Man changed. Sin has put a division between God and Man (Genesis 3:23). God is not prepared to tolerate sin (Psalm 5:4,5).

We therefore have a body that corrupts and a mind that is naturally prone to sin. The effect of sin on us is that after a short life, often plagued with pain and suffering, our mind and body are both destroyed by death.

We will now consider our destiny as a result of sin, and how we can escape from this destiny. Lesson 4 will focus on the mind, and the battle that takes place here as we strive to change from a fleshly mind to a spiritual mind.

WHAT IS THE DESTINY OF MAN WITHOUT THE MASTER PLAN?

“The wages of sin is death...” (Romans 6:23). We all sin, and so receive our due wage - death (Romans 5:12). Death is therefore a punishment for sin.

Our destiny is therefore the grave. Here we know nothing and cannot praise God (Psalm 6:5, Ecclesiastes 9:5, Isaiah 38:18-19). It is a place of silence (Psalm 115:17) and darkness (Job 10:21-22), in which our thoughts perish (Psalm 146:4). Indeed, we have the same destiny as a beast - the silent grave (Ecclesiastes 3:18-19).

The grave is a place of unconsciousness, and death is often referred to as a “sleep” (John 11:11-13, Psalms 13:3, Luke 8:52). By sinning, man reverses the formula of his making. For in the beginning *“the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.”* (Genesis 2:7 KJV). God took dust, and by breathing His breath, or spirit (Job 33:4, Job 34:14-15, Isaiah 42:5) into the dust, He made

a living soul.

God established the formula:

DUST + SPIRIT OF GOD = LIVING SOUL

Souls can love, hate, hunger, and get tired (Songs 1:7 AV, 2 Samuel 5:8 AV, Proverbs 9:15 KJV, Psalms 119:28). And souls can also sin (Ezekiel 18:4)!

Sinning causes the reverse of the formula to take place:

LIVING SOUL - SPIRIT OF GOD = DUST

The breath of life or Spirit of God returns to God, and so the "living soul" returns to the dust. *"The dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it."* (Ecclesiastes 12:7, Ezekiel 18:4,20). So we receive our reward - death, an unconscious sleep in the grave.

Our destiny, without God's Master Plan, is DEATH - an eternal state of unconsciousness, where both our mind and body are destroyed.

IS THERE ANY ESCAPE FROM THIS DESTINY?

Yes, but only one way!

The Lord Jesus Christ was a man who never sinned (1 Peter 2:22). His destiny therefore, could not be death (Acts 2:24). God therefore raised Jesus from the grave. So Jesus shattered the hold of death for himself, and now has the keys for unlocking the grave for us (Revelation 1:18). Only Jesus can release us from our destiny.

Jesus will return to the earth and raise the dead (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). There will be a judgement (Acts 17:31) to decide whether we have overcome the mind of the flesh. This struggle is discussed in Lesson 4. Those who are accepted will receive life, while the remaining will receive eternal death (Matthew 25:31-46, John 5:25-29).

The Lord Jesus Christ holds out the wonderful hope of the resurrection, an escape from our destiny, for the righteous. Jesus promises that when he returns he will *"transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body"* (Philippians 3:21). We will no longer have decaying, dying bodies, but incorruptible, immortal bodies like Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:51-58). We will never be able to die again (Luke 20:36). So, through the Lord Jesus Christ, God

offers us a gift - a gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23), and a share in God's Master Plan, through the resurrection of our bodies!

There is escape from our destiny of death, through the hope of the resurrection by the Lord Jesus Christ, when he returns to establish his kingdom.

We have learned that:

- God created man in the beginning, and man was very good
- Man sinned
- The consequence of sin is death
- Death is a reversal of the formula that created man, that is: LIVING SOUL - SPIRIT OF GOD = DUST
- Death is a state of sleep, where we know nothing
- The only way to escape from death is through the Lord Jesus Christ
- Jesus will return to the earth and raise the just and the unjust to judgement
- The just will receive immortal bodies like Jesus, and will never sin or die again

Why do we need God's Master Plan?

We need God's Master Plan if we want to escape from our destiny of death.

What stops us from participating in God's Master Plan?

OBJECTIVE: The objective of this lesson, is to illustrate that it is our sin that separates us from God. This sin is caused by our corrupt human nature, and this sinful condition will prevent us from participating in God's Master Plan, unless it is changed.

OVERVIEW: In the previous section we concentrated on the effect that sin has on our bodies, but now we need to understand more clearly the mind behind this sin. This is important, because the state of our minds now, will determine the nature of our minds and bodies in the future. As an introduction then, we will look at who the sinners are that are prevented from participating in God's Master Plan. Then we will look at what sin is, where it comes from, and what causes it. Finally we will consider what the devil and Satan have to do with this subject, and how they can be overcome.

WHO MAY NOT PARTICIPATE IN GOD'S MASTER PLAN?

The Apostle Paul is quite emphatic that no unrepentant sinners of any kind will be permitted to "*inherit the Kingdom of God*" (Galatians 5:19-21). He consequently warns Jesus' disciples not to be deceived by their sinful nature, because such wicked people cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.

WHO ARE SINNERS?

Sadly, every single human being who has ever lived (except Jesus) falls into this category, for "*there is no one righteous not even one*" (Romans 3:10). It is interesting to note that Paul says that because

of this, we *“fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). It is clear then that when we sin, we don't show the glory of God's character, and that's why sinners will not be a part of God's Master Plan.

WHAT IS SIN?

Sin can simply be defined as disobedience to God's laws or commandments. Every time we do what God says we shouldn't do, or don't do what God says we should do, we break His law, and commit a sin (James 4:17, 1 John 3:4). This is doing our own will (the mind of humanity), instead of God's will for us (the mind of the spirit).

Sin is only possible because man has been given the gift of free will. This is the ability that man has to choose between:

- Obeying and disobeying
- Following God's will or following self will
- Subduing self will or ignoring God
- Sacrifice or self satisfaction and indulgence
- Revealing God's nature or Human nature
- Fulfilling God's purpose or sinning
- LIFE or DEATH

Free will is also the unique characteristic of a man that gives us the potential to reveal God's glory. Without free will we could not reveal qualities such as love, mercy, and patience. Love cannot exist where free will does not exist. God gave man free will so that we would have the capacity to reveal His glory.

WHERE DOES SIN COME FROM?

Sin originates from inside the heart (mind) of man. The Bible refers to the heart as the source of our thoughts, and says that its natural way of thinking is *“only evil all the time”* making it *“deceitful above all things, and beyond cure”* (Genesis 6:5, Jeremiah 17:9). It is important to note that we are each responsible for our own sins, because Jesus says *“all these evils come from inside and make a man unclean”* (Mark 7:20-23).

WHAT CAUSES MAN TO SIN?

We sin when we are tempted, that is enticed, by our own wrong

desires. James in his letter describes it as a process, explaining that it all starts with temptation by our own wrong desires, then when desire has conceived it gives birth to sin, which when it matures finally results in death (James 1:13-15). Another word the Bible uses for our wrong desires is the devil, and this term is explained in more detail below.

WHAT IS THE DEVIL?

The word devil only occurs in the New Testament, and is the Greek word *diabolos*, which means a slanderer or malicious talkers (It is translated this way in 1 Timothy 3:11, 2 Timothy 3:3, and Titus 2:3).

The devil is an example of biblical personification, i.e. the portrayal of a concept as a person so that we can understand it better. This concept is our corrupt human nature that naturally tends towards sin (see the table below). It is also a term used to refer to those who are overcome by their evil desires (John 6:70). It is this devil that must be destroyed for us to participate in God's Master Plan (Romans 8:3). The devil has been conquered by Jesus, but we still have to fight against it in this life (Romans 7:18-23), because the world and God pull in opposite directions, *"for everything in the world, the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does, comes not from the Father, but from the world"* (1 John 2:16).

However in the fulfilment of the Master Plan we will have the mind of Christ as well as immortal bodies, and so be able to glorify God as Jesus did (Ezekiel 11:19-20, Hebrews 8:10-11). Peter summarises this hope in his letter when he says, *"(God)... has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires"* (2 Peter 1:4).

The symbol of the devil is best understood by reading the following pairs of passages in parallel, where the terms sin and the devil are used interchangeably, and can thus be seen to be synonymous.

SIN	DEVIL	CONTEXT
Romans 7:23	Ephesians 6:11	What we fight against
Romans 6:23	Hebrews 2:14	What causes us to die
Hebrews 9:26	Hebrews 2:14	What Jesus conquered

Hebrews 12:4	James 4:7	What we must resist
John 8:34	1 John 3:8	Who sinners submit to
1 John 3:5	1 John 3:8	Why Jesus appeared

WHAT ABOUT SATAN?

Satan is an untranslated Hebrew word that simply means an opponent or adversary. This person can be either good or bad, depending on whether they support or oppose God's will. Examples of good "Satans" are an angel opposing Balaam (Numbers 22:22), and God himself acting as an adversary to king David and the nation of Israel, (1 Chronicles 21:1 compared with 2 Samuel 24:1). An illustration of a bad "Satan" is the Apostle Peter, because he was resisting God's will for the Lord Jesus Christ that he should die on the cross (Matthew 16:23).

We have learned that:

- We all sin when we are personally enticed to evil by the wicked desires of our own hearts
- This corrupt human nature that the Bible calls the devil, must be destroyed because it is separating us from God, and preventing us from participating in God's Master Plan.
- Jesus has destroyed the devil, and in the Kingdom we too can share his divine nature, and glorify God by always doing His will, but only if we strive to have the mind of Christ now.

What stops us from participating in God's Master Plan?

Our own sinful nature stops us from participating in God's Master Plan.

Who is the Key to the Master Plan?

OBJECTIVE: The objective of this lesson is to understand who is the key to the Master Plan. On the basis of already established clues, we will focus on Jesus and why we need him if we are to share in the Master Plan. We will see what relevance a man who lived 2000 years ago has to us in our lives now. We will also see why Jesus had to die and how this act saved the human race and allows us to become part of the Master Plan.

OVERVIEW: This lesson is concerned with the Key to God's Master Plan. We will start by going back to the Promises we looked at in Lesson 2. We will see a special seed is promised right from the beginning. We will learn that Jesus Christ is that special seed and he is the solution to the problem. The Old Testament is full of types that point forward to him and his sacrifice. We will see why Jesus had to have God as his Father and Mary (a human) as his mother. Finally we will look at why Jesus had to die and what it means to us.

BACK TO THE PROMISES...

You will remember in Lesson 1 we looked at a series of special promises that God made to some of the faithful men of old. These promises outline the means by which God intends to make his Master Plan happen.

In passing we noticed specific reference to a "seed". Who is this promised seed?

Lets go right back to the beginning to the first promise with hope that God ever made. We find even in this first promise a reference to a "seed": *"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and hers, he will crush your head, and you*

will strike his heel." (Genesis 3:15)

Here we have a promise of a seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. The promise says that one day the seed of the woman will kill the seed of the serpent and in the process incur a temporary injury.

Let us remind ourselves of the two sets of promises we looked at earlier. This time we will look out for the specific promise of the seed.

Take a close look at Genesis 22:17-18. Here God speaks clearly of a promised Seed ("offspring" - NIV). The Seed is going to possess the gates of the enemy - sounds similar to what we read in Genesis 3:15.

What about the promises to David - do we find the seed in these promises as well? Sure thing - look at 2 Samuel 7:12. God promises David a seed that would rule forever from David's throne.

One thing's for certain - this seed is the key to God's promises. And if he is the key to God's promises then he is most certainly the key to God's Master Plan. So who is the seed?

WHO IS THE SEED?

The answer to this question is well established in the New Testament. Two references provide us with enough evidence to draw conclusions.

Luke 1:32-34 - In this passage the angel Gabriel makes it clear that Jesus Christ is the promised seed of David.

Well, you might say, does that mean he is also the seed that was promised to Abraham? Perhaps they were different. Paul confirms that Jesus is also the promised seed in Abraham's promises.

Galatians 3:16 - In this passage Paul makes it clear that the seed promised to Abraham was indeed Jesus Christ. It couldn't be made clearer than in this verse.

The conclusion is that Jesus Christ is the promised seed and he is the key to God's Master plan. But why do we need this promised seed?

WHY DO WE NEED JESUS?

The answer is actually quite simple. Without Jesus we cannot be

reconciled to God. Sin separates us from God. Look at what the prophet Isaiah says: *“Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear”* (Isaiah 59:1,2) .

We need to have sin removed so that we can be reconciled to God. This was the most important task of Jesus Christ. The angel Gabriel confirmed this when he instructed Mary to call his name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21).

HOW CAN JESUS SAVE US FROM OUR SINS?

The Bible makes it clear that though his sacrifice on the cross Jesus saved us from sin. Let's have a closer look at how this happened. Let's start at the beginning again...

ADAM AND EVE

When Adam and Eve sinned they realized that they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together to make themselves coverings (Genesis 3:7). But God was not satisfied with these coverings and He made them garments of skin and clothed them with these (Genesis 3:21). What made the skins acceptable and not the fig leaves? Surely they both covered their nakedness? There are differences which mattered and were important in God's eyes. The covering of skin required 'death' and the 'shedding of blood' (Hebrews 9:22). Adam and Eve saw that forgiveness of sin cost the life of an animal. This pointed forward to the crucifixion of Jesus; that God would provide a covering for sin by death and the shedding of blood. It is important for us to take note that the consequence of sin is death, and forgiveness of sin cost the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE LAW OF MOSES

The people of Israel had to offer sin and guilt offerings (Leviticus 1-7). These had to be animals, either a bull or ram, that were without defect. The person offering had to lay his hands on the animal as it was killed (Leviticus 4:4). In doing this they acknowledged their guilt and the animal was a sacrifice for their sins. This pointed forward to the more perfect sacrifice of Jesus. The animal was physically perfect whereas Jesus was morally perfect. The offerer had to associate with the sacrifice for it to be an effective means for forgiveness. We must publicly associate ourselves (through

baptism - see Lesson 7) with the death of Jesus to be covered by his sacrifice (Romans 6:3-14).

WHY WAS THERE A LAW?

You may be asking why God went through this process of setting up the law of Moses (the Old Testament)? Why didn't the history of mankind start with the Lord Jesus Christ and his crucifixion for our sins?

To answer this question let us take a well known example. If you are trying to unravel a mystery you never appreciate the problem if you are told the solution straight away. It is only after grappling with the mystery for many days that you really understand the full meaning of the solution when it is revealed to you. The same is true with the law. It is there to make us truly realise that we are sinners (Romans 7:13; Galatians 3:19) and that we need the solution of the Lord Jesus Christ. *"The law was a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ that we may be justified by faith"* (Galatians 3:24-AV). Without the law we would not have realised our true position before God.

JESUS CHRIST - A COVERING FOR SIN?

So we can see from the previous 3 lessons that sacrifice was necessary for the forgiveness of sins. It would seem evident that the sacrifices of the Old Testament were all pointing forward to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. *"But now Christ has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sins by the sacrifice of himself... so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people"*. (Hebrews 9:26,28) The crucifixion of Christ represents the perfect sacrifice and shedding of blood which is able to cover the sins of many.

WHY DID JESUS NEED TO BE BOTH SON OF GOD AND SON OF MAN?

Son of God

God provided the world with His son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the solution from God's point of view because he perfectly displayed the character of God and so gave an effective example for us to follow. He could say *"Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father"* (John 14:9). Jesus also said *"I am the way and the truth*

and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him” (John 14:6,7). He showed us the glory of God. He was able to do this because he was the Son of God. *“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being”* (Hebrews 1:3). He had a very special relationship with his Father (Luke 2:49; 3:22). He had God’s power without limit (John 3:34). Here was a man who could be perfect if he chose to be. Jesus was named *“Immanuel which means, ‘God with us’”* (Matthew 1:23). This is the solution for God because now men could see a living example, someone displaying perfectly the character and purpose of God.

Son of Man

You may then be asking why Jesus always described himself as the Son of Man (Matthew 8:20; 9:6)? This is because he had to share our human nature.

“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Hebrews 2:14-18).

This explains why God himself couldn't have done it. Firstly God cannot overcome something to which he is not exposed. God cannot be tempted (James 1:13). If God had come to earth and lived a life of perfection there would be no battle and victory over sin because there would have been no possibility of defeat. Secondly God could not be a merciful and faithful high priest because He could not share man's nature.

Son of God and Son of man

To bring two irreconcilably separated parties together you need a mediator. In the Old Testament the high priests carried out this role (Leviticus 16:15-17). As we can see from the verses quoted

above, Jesus has now taken over this role. A mediator needs to understand the feelings of both sides and to be respected by both sides. God sent Jesus as a mediator to bring us back to Him. *“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ”* (1Timothy 2:5). Jesus had to understand our temptations and so he was born of a human mother. *“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who was tempted in every way, just as we are - yet without sin”* (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus shared our human nature and he conquered it because he never gave in to its desires (Romans 8:3,4). He is able to set us free from sin because he was never captured by sin. *“For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous”* (Romans 5:19). The mission of Jesus was to save sinners (Matthew 1:21). The meaning of the name Jesus is ‘God saves’. The Power of God and the virgin birth has made it possible for Jesus to be both Son of God and Son of man. Being the Son of God meant Jesus could attain perfection and being the Son of man meant Jesus was able to represent man.

WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO DIE?

Jesus had led a perfect life, overcoming sin and fully revealing to us the character of God. But how does that help us? Only through his death can we associate with that victory.

God wants to save us so that we can also be part of the Master Plan. *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16). Jesus was a sinless man and did not deserve the wages of sin which is death (Romans 6:23). However to save us he bore the sins of the world (Hebrews 9:26,28) and so he had to die. *“He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed”* (Isaiah 53:5). Jesus died as a sacrifice for our sins, but because he was sinless, the grave could not hold him. He shared our sinful nature, which as we have seen from Lesson 3, is destined to death.

“But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him” (Acts 2:24). He rose again and was given eternal life because

he conquered human nature (Hebrews 2:14). He took his place in heaven at the right hand of God (Acts 3:33) to mediate for us, bridging the gap and bringing us into fellowship with God. *“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world”* (1 John 2:1,2) and *“...we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation”* (Romans 5:11).

WHAT DOES JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION MEAN TO US?

If forgiveness was easy, how would we ever be moved to change from a life serving sin? Sin costs lives and the forgiveness of sin cost a life, the life of Jesus. Jesus died as a sacrifice for our sins. We can be forgiven of our sins if we accept his sacrifice. The way in which we accept his sacrifice is for us to be baptised into his name. *“...Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?”* (Romans 6:3) . In doing this we associate ourselves with the death of Jesus and also with his perfect life. *“If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus”* (Romans 6:5-11). Through baptism we become the sons of God (Galatians 3:26,27). God is willing to forgive our sin, overlook our impure lives, and count our faith as righteousness (1 John 1:7,9; 3:5,6; Romans 4:5). If our sins are forgiven, then and only then, can we become part of the Master Plan.

However if we ignore the sacrifice of Jesus then we stand naked before God and we shall receive what our works deserve - death (Revelation 16:15). What is more, we would be rejecting the love

that has been extended to us in Jesus dying on the cross so that we could be forgiven. If we ignore his love now, we can only fear his judgement in the future. *“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we received the knowledge of the truth, no more sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgement and raging fire that will consume the enemies of God”* (Hebrews 10:26,27). Jesus will judge us at the resurrection. *“...This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marvelled at among those who have believed”* (2 Thessalonians 1:7-11). The death of Jesus leaves no room to be neutral. We either accept it or we reject it.

We have learned that:

- Man and God are separated because of sin.
- The Bible establishes the need for a perfect sacrifice.
- Jesus was the Son of God which meant that he could be perfect if he chose to be.
- Jesus was the Son of man because he had to be made like us to overcome sin.
- If Jesus had not died, there would have been no forgiveness of sin.
- Through baptism we associate ourselves with the death and resurrection of Christ.

Who is the key to the Master Plan?

Jesus Christ, the promised seed, the only one who has revealed God's Glory.

Who is the Master Planner?

OBJECTIVE: The objective of this lesson is to learn about God, the Father, and to consider the origin of the Lord Jesus Christ and why this is of importance to us.

OVERVIEW: We will start this lesson by identifying who the Master Planner really is. We will find out more about His nature and even His name. We will look at how the planner has become a Father and how His power helps make sure the plan is realised.

WHO IS THE PLANNER?

That seems like a fair enough question. We have been spending some time on this Master Plan, but what about the actual Master Planner? Well back in Numbers 14:21 we learned that the plan belongs to the God of Israel who was talking to Moses on Mount Sinai. The planner is therefore the God of Israel who is also the Creator of heaven and earth (Isaiah 45:12).

WHAT IS HIS NAME?

Now that we know that God is the Master Planner, we will want to get to know the Planner better. The best place to go to find out more about the Planner is to His Word, the Bible. The Bible gives us plenty of information about God and even tells us about His name.

In Exodus 3:13-15 Moses asks for God's name. It is here that the name of God is specifically revealed as 'YHWH'. Although most versions of the Bible translate this name into the common noun 'LORD', it is generally agreed that it should remain a proper noun, as the personal name of God. Literally interpreted the name means "He who was, and is, and will be". God's name is directly linked to the Master Plan.

When God revealed His glory to Moses in Exodus 34:5-7, we understood that he professed his character to Moses. A closer look reveals that he proclaimed his name, YHWH, to Moses, which encapsulates His character and purpose.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE NAME?

God's name, YHWH, is in fact a family name. That is, God intends many people to bear the name, much like a surname in our modern day culture. It is a name which is given to God's saints, those who choose to reveal God's glory in their lives: "*Simeon hath declared how God at first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name*" (Acts 15:14 -AV).

From this we see three closely related concepts which all provide different views of God's Master Plan.

We have God's Glory revealed through His name which encapsulates His character.

From this we can see that one day the earth will be full of people bearing the name of God (Revelation 3:12, Zechariah 14:9). Zechariah 14:9 clearly states that God's name will one day be the only name. All people will be bearers of His name and His glory will fill the earth.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF GOD?

- God is Eternal

God's life has neither beginning or end, He is eternal (1 Timothy 1:17) "*who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see*" (1 Timothy 6:16). He says of Himself "*It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshalled their starry hosts*" (Isaiah 45:12).

- God is Spirit

God is described as being a 'Spirit' or 'Power'. "*God is spirit and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24).

- God cannot be Tempted

God is not subject to evil desires like we are. He cannot be tempted to do wrong and therefore he does not have the potential to sin. "*...For God cannot be tempted by evil...*" (James 1:13). Note that this is where God, the Father, is quite different from Jesus Christ, His son. We learned in the last session that Jesus was "*tempted every way, just as we are.*" (Hebrews 4:15)

- God cannot live with sin

God refuses to live with sin. He has made a plan for sinners to be reconciled to Him but will not live with sinners on a permanent basis. *"For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity."* (Psalm 5:4,5)

- God is Omnipotent

That's a pretty big word - but it simply means that God is all powerful - in fact God claims to be the only power. God claims to rule in the kingdoms of men (Daniel 4:17) and also proclaims that He is the one and only God (Isaiah 45:5-7). Note: This implies that there is only one real power in the Universe (the word 'God' actually means power). God is responsible for everything that happens both good and "bad", (Isaiah 45:7).

- God is Omnipresent

Another big word with a simple meaning. This means that God is everywhere present. In other words there is no where we can go to hide from God (Psalm 139:7-12).

- God is Omniscient

The last of our big words. This one simply means that God knows everything. There is no thought or desire that is hidden from God. He knows all things including what is going to happen in the future (Isaiah 46:9-10, Matthew 10:30).

WHEN DID GOD BECOME A FATHER?

In the Old Testament God is revealed primarily by his name YHWH. He is described as the God and redeemer of Israel. There is very little reference to God as a Father in the Old Testament. In fact the references that do exist refer to God as a Father in the future tense. The promise to David in is a good example: *"I will be his father, and he shall be my son"* (2 Samuel 7:14).

In contrast, God is primarily revealed as a Father in the New Testament. From this it can be seen that God was not always a Father. He became a Father once His son was born to the virgin Mary.

"The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God'" (Luke 1:35).

The writer to the Hebrews also speaks of God as becoming a Father at a specific point in time: *"For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son; Today I have become your Father?'"* (Hebrews 1:5).

We are now able to join in this special relationship with the Master Planner. His calling is for us to join His family and for Him to be our Father. God has extended His love for us to be His sons and daughters.

"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1).

In Romans, Paul talks about God's desire to have us as His adopted children;

"For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'" (Romans 8:15).

This all links back to God's Master Plan. If we become members of God's family, it is natural that we then bear His name. Like with any family, all members bear the same family name, which we call a surname.

God wants to fill the earth with His family, His own sons and daughters. Once this is achieved His name will fill the whole earth. If His name is the only name, then His glory will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea and the plan will be a reality!

The prayer that Jesus taught his disciples, the Lord's prayer, is really the family's prayer which encapsulates all we have been saying:

"Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9).

Let's take a look at the Lord's prayer. The prayer starts by emphasising the fact that God is our Father - the family relationship we have been discussing. We have seen that because God is our Father and we are His children we become bearers of His name. Hence the next line focuses on the importance of God's name. How will God's name eventually be hallowed in all the world? We have answered this before when we asked the question in Lesson 2, How will the Master Plan be realised? Thy Kingdom come. The kingdom

is the means by which God will realise the Master Plan. The Lord's prayer confirms this conclusion - the implication is that when the kingdom comes, God's will, will be done on earth. In other words the kingdom will be the means by which God's will or His glory will cover the earth. Let's keep praying this all important prayer!

WHAT IS THE POWER OF GOD?

The spirit of God is His Power or energy by which He created the world (Psalm 104:30, Genesis 1:2) and keeps us all alive (Job 34:14,15).

The Holy Spirit literally means a 'separate' or 'set apart' spirit. So it seems that God has His 'everyday' power called the Spirit of God and His 'set apart' power called the Holy Spirit. The natural question to ask is 'What is this Holy Spirit set apart or separated for?' It seems evident from examples of its use in the Bible that the Holy Spirit is God's power set apart specifically for the out-working of the Master Plan. The Holy Spirit is the driving force or power behind the Master Plan of God. Two examples of its use will illustrate this point.

The first example of how God uses his Holy Spirit is the conception of the Lord Jesus Christ. The angel Gabriel explains to Mary how Almighty God would become the Father of her child when he said "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God*" (Luke 1:35). So here we see the Holy Spirit being active in the conception of the key to God's Master Plan. A second example is in the writing of the Bible as explained by Peter, "*For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*" (2 Peter 1:21).

The Bible is the record of God's Master Plan. The Holy Spirit was responsible for its recording.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KNOW THE MASTER PLANNER?

As we have seen many times before God is intent on filling the earth with His character. A knowledge and intimate understanding of God's character is therefore critical for anyone who desires

to participate in God's plan. God demands that we get to know about Him, and believe in Him, and His Master Plan for this world, in order that we may be part of it and be given eternal life. Jesus himself said *"Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent"* (John 17:3). The writer of the letter to the Hebrews adds that *"without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him"* (Hebrews 11:6).

God has primarily revealed His character to us through the life of Jesus. He has been the only person who has truly manifested the character of God, his Father. So much so that he was able to say *"Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father"* (John 14:9). *"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being"* (Hebrews 1:3).

There are many passages in the Bible that help us to understand more about God's character. In Romans Paul summarises God's character as being that of Goodness and Severity;

"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God" (Romans 11:22 - AV)

God's most important and overriding characteristic which speaks of his goodness is His love. John confirms this for us in his first letter:

"And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16).

He is also a God of mercy and longsuffering. A closer look at the verses 17-21 before the key passage in Numbers 14:21 gives a clear example of God's mercy. Moses appeals for God's mercy not to destroy Israel because of their gross disobedience. Because of His mercy He relents but confirms His statement of intent with the earth through the words of Numbers 14:21. God is merciful, but His mercy will not compromise His intent to fill the earth with His glory.

And so there is also a severity aspect to God's character. God will eventually cut off all those who are preventing the realisation of His plan. Paul speaks of this day of judgement in Acts.

"In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now commands

all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31).

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

The following references provide additional support for the issues raised above:

The Character of God

Exodus 20:5-6, Numbers 23:19, 1 Kings 8:23, Psalm 139:1-12, Isaiah 40:25-26, Isaiah 45:5-13, 18-19, Isaiah 46:9, Jeremiah 32:17-19, Mark 12:29, Ephesians 4:6, Hebrews 12:29.

God Creates Good and Evil

Exodus 4:11, Deuteronomy 32:39, Job 2:10, Isaiah 45:7, Amos 3:6.

We have learned that:

- God, the creator of heaven and earth, is the Master Planner.
- He is revealed by His name, YHWH.
- His name represents His character and we are able to bear His name.
- He has a unique nature
- He is eternal
- He is Spirit
- He cannot be tempted
- He cannot live with sin
- He is omnipotent
- He is omniscient
- He is omnipresent
- We are called to be His children.
- The Holy Spirit is the power of God that He uses to implement His Master Plan.
- We are called to show forth God’s character in the same way as the Lord Jesus did.

Who is the Master Planner?

The Master Planner is God, who is revealed through His name, YHWH, and has chosen to be the Father of those who love Him.

How can we participate in the Master Plan?

OBJECTIVE: The objective of this lesson is to explain the vital importance of baptism and how God offers salvation to us through sincere belief, repentance and baptism. Once you have decided you would like to be part of God's plan, important changes need to be made.

OVERVIEW: First, we will consider belief and repentance, the first two steps in our journey to baptism. Next, we look at what the Bible teaches about baptism and what it means for you.

WHAT IS BELIEF?

Just before ascending into heaven, Jesus spoke these life-changing words to his disciples, *"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved"* (Mark 16:15-16). Before we can be baptised it is essential that we believe the "good news" or gospel of the Kingdom of God. In this series of studies we have been unfolding the message of God's Master Plan, the good news as Jesus called it. Why is belief so important? Once again, it's all related to God's Master Plan which is to fill the earth with His glory. Belief helps us to understand that we have fallen short of this ideal, *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23).

We realise that we are related to the laws of sin and death because of our descent from Adam, and that we need a change of relationship - to be related to Jesus Christ - to be saved from sin and death. Baptism is the way that we change our old relationship to Adam and begin a new relationship of everlasting life with Jesus, our Saviour. In the Acts of the Apostles we discover many examples of belief preceding baptism, for example, *"When they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the Kingdom of God and the*

name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12, 8:26-38, 16:31-33). It is clear then that belief is essential before those who understand the gospel, its significance and the responsibilities that it brings into our lives, can be baptised.

WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

Belief is a good start on the road to salvation, but a little careful study reveals that there is a second step before baptism. It's a word that we don't hear much of today and some of us may even find it a little old fashioned. The word is “repentance”. The Bible uses this word to signify a total change, a new way of life, a new relationship - out of Adam into Christ. Repentance means turning our backs and closing the door on our old way of life and beginning a new life following the teachings and way of life of Jesus Christ. Repentance is an acknowledgement that we are sorry for our old way of life, that we will try harder in the future to follow Jesus faithfully with all our life's strength. *“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death”* (2 Corinthians 7:10).

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

If we could read Greek, we would discover that the English word “baptism” is derived from the Greek word “baptizo”. A few thousand years ago, “baptizo” was an everyday, household word - a man immersing a garment in a bath of dye was baptizing it; a ship that was sunk in a storm was baptized, totally covered with water. Not surprisingly then, all of the baptisms we read of in the New Testament refer to a full immersion in water. In Acts chapter 8 we read of the apostle Philip preaching to an Ethiopian eunuch while they were both riding in a chariot. Once the man understood Philip's preaching about Jesus Christ, he gave a testimony of his faith, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” and then was baptized by full immersion in water: *“Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him”* (Acts 8:38).

Full immersion is important because baptism is likened to a burial. Just as we would not bury someone by sprinkling a few clods of earth over their body, so baptism requires a full immersion in water not just a few drops of water on our heads. *“Don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptized into his*

death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Romans 6:3-4). Jesus died a physical death and was literally buried; in baptism, we die a symbolic death, we bury ourselves in water. After his death though, Jesus was raised to a new life, an unending life, so we as believers rise out of the water with a promise of everlasting life, dead to sin and alive to a new life of righteousness in God's sight.

WHY BE BAPTIZED?

Firstly, it is a commandment of Jesus, *"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:16). Jesus teaches that if we want to share in the Master Plan and hope to enter God's Kingdom, we must be baptized: *"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again"* (John 3:3). So important is this teaching that Jesus left us with his own personal example that we should follow. Jesus himself was baptized, even though he was without any sins that needed to be washed away (Matthew 3:13-17).

Secondly, as mentioned above, baptism is the symbolic start of a new life, a new saving relationship with God and Christ. When we are baptized, we are said to be "in Christ" or to have "put on" Christ. *"For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ"* (Galatians 3:27). Being clothed with the righteousness of Christ means that we are now in a position to share in the promises and strive for everlasting life. Remember that in the garden of Eden, God clothed Adam and Eve with coats of skin to cover their nakedness after they sinned. *"The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them"* (Genesis 3:21). An animal died to give them a covering but God has given us His Son, who died for us and shed his blood, to give us forgiveness of sins. Under the Old Testament law, the person sacrificing an animal had to associate himself with the offering by laying his hand on its head and confessing his sin. Baptism is the way we associate ourselves with Jesus.

HOW DOES BAPTISM SAVE US?

It saves us by washing away our sins. It is God's appointed way for washing away sin, His divine instruction for complete forgive-

ness and rebirth. *“And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptised and wash your sins away, calling on his name”* (Acts 22:16. See also Acts 2:37-38, 1 Peter 3:21). Baptism is not meant to be an inconvenience or simply a ritual, it is a blessing from God to be able to close a chapter of our lives and begin again. It is a means whereby we can associate ourselves with the victory that Jesus has won over sin. *“If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection”* (Romans 6:5).

We must realise that we need faith that God will do all that He has promised us, and that eternal life is a gift from Him, (Romans 6:23) not an obligation on His part simply because we have been fully immersed in water!

It is interesting to note that the idea of ‘being saved by water’ is in fact established in the Old Testament. There are two very good stories in the Old Testament where believers were saved by water. Both of these examples are picked up by New Testament writers and related to baptism.

The first concerns the children of Israel and their crossing of the Red Sea. You will remember that the water of the sea actually saved them from impending doom. Paul picks up on this story in 1 Corinthians 10:1-2.

The second story is that of Noah and the flood. Noah and his family were saved by the very same water that destroyed all the other people. The water lifted up the ark which was carrying Noah and his family. Peter uses this story, in 1 Peter 3:20-21, to illustrate how in similar fashion we are saved by water through baptism.

HOW DOES BAPTISM FIT INTO THE MASTER PLAN?

God’s strategy to achieve His Master Plan has been revealed through the centuries of time in promises made to faithful men. In an earlier lesson, we learned of the promises that God made to His friend Abraham. The exciting thing for us is that by being baptized into Jesus Christ, we are able to share in the wonderful promises that were made to Abraham. Do you know that Abraham never received the promises that God made to him? *“He gave him no inheritance here, not even a foot of ground. But God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land,*

even though at that time Abraham had no child” (Acts 7:5). Why the delay? Because you may be the last jewel that God is waiting for: *“These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect”* (Hebrews 11:39-40). This better plan is the Master Plan! God wants us to also have a share in the promises and the Master Plan.

The key to understanding how we can share in the promises is found in Galatians chapter 3. It's worthwhile reading the entire chapter. The promises were made to Abraham and to his descendant, Jesus. *“The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say ‘and to seeds’, meaning many people, but ‘and to your seed’, meaning one person, who is Christ”* (Galatians 3:16). In fact, the promises are soon to be fulfilled by Jesus Christ - he is going to be the King of the world. But most of us are not Jewish and not related to Abraham, so how does this help us? Those of us who have been baptized into Christ belong to Christ and have therefore become joint heirs to the promises. *“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise”* (Galatians 3:27-29).

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER BAPTISM?

Baptism is only the beginning of a new way of life in Christ in which we try to follow the example he has set us. He said,

“If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15) and *“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it”* (Matthew 16:24-25).

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

The following references provide additional support for the issues raised above: Acts 2:37-42, Acts 8:26-40, Acts 9:18 Romans 6, Colossians 2:12-13.

We have learned that...

- Belief is the understanding of God's Master Plan.
- Repentance is being sorry for our sins, and turning away from our old way of life.
- Baptism is full immersion in water.
- We are baptised to
 - associate ourselves with the death and resurrection of Christ,
 - wash away our sins,
 - become part of the family of Christ, and so heirs of the promises made to Abraham.

How can we participate in the Master Plan?

We must believe God's Master Plan, repent of our old life, and start a new life by being baptised.

How should a citizen of the Master Plan live?

OBJECTIVE: The objective of this lesson is to discover how we should live our lives as a result of our commitment to Christ. This objective will be met by considering our life in Christ in three parts:

- What are we committing ourselves to? What does Christ require us to do in our lives for him.
- What are the Christian principles that we must hold to as our guide through life?
- How will God help us in our life of service to Him?

OVERVIEW: A life in Christ means that our whole mind set should be changed to be like that of the Lord Jesus Christ. "*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 2:5). God gave us laws and statutes to follow in the Old Testament and mankind has found them impossible to follow. Now He has given us an example of a perfect life in His Son Jesus. A life in Christ means to be like Christ in our life.

WHAT DOES CHRIST REQUIRE OF US?

Jesus was once asked the question "*Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*" (Luke 10:25). We must take heed to his answer because we are asking the same question in our lives. Jesus replied "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and Love your neighbour as yourself*" (Luke 10:27). James elaborates on this by describing religion that God our Father accepts as "pure and faultless" as this "*to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world*" (James 1:27). Paul also picks up on this in his letter to the Galatians (Galatians 5:14).

We learned in the previous lesson that after baptism we become a

'new man' in Christ and put off the 'old man' (2 Corinthians 5:17). Our lives after baptism should therefore reflect this. The 'old man' which manifests characteristics as described in Galatians 5 verses 19 to 21 should die as we know *"those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God"* (Galatians 5:21). In its place a 'new man' should rise manifesting characteristics of the Master Plan, the fruit of the Spirit, *"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"* (Galatians 5:22,23). *"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires"* (Galatians 5:24).

Christ requires everything of us if we want to be his disciples. *"Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple"* (Luke 14:27). In our lives we can either live to ourselves or live to Christ. If we live to ourselves we can expect nothing more than a futile life leading to a meaningless death (Ecclesiastes 1:1-11, 9:5). If we live to Christ we will be blessed in this life (1 Timothy 4:8) and will be given the gift of eternal life in the future (Romans 6:23; Matthew 25:31-46).

To answer this question more specifically we need to see how the first Christians led their lives after baptism. *"They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer"* (Acts 2:42).

Apostles Teaching

We are required to hold fast to the true teaching of the scriptures. This includes all that Jesus and the apostles taught (Matthew 28:20, 1 Thessalonians 4:2). It also includes all that Jesus based his teaching on, that is the Old Testament which was a shadow of good things to come (Hebrews 10:1). To obey the commandments of Jesus is important as by this *"we know that we have come to know him"* (1 John 2:3), *"we live in him, and Christ in us"* (1 John 3:24), and it is a proof of how much we love God (1 John 5:3).

Fellowship

The Greek word for fellowship used here is "koinonia" and originates from the word for partnership. It also means communion, distribution and to communicate. This is an active word and has a lot to do with the commandment *"to love your neighbour as yourself"* (Matthew 19:19). We have to be willing to give to those

in need, to remember Christ's death with others of like faith, and to communicate with each other. As we read in Malachi 3:16,17 *"Then those that feared the LORD talked with each other and the LORD listened and heard..... 'They will be mine,' says the LORD Almighty, 'in the day when I make up my treasured possession'....."* We should realise how important regularly meeting together is. *"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another and all the more as you see the day approaching"* (Hebrews 10:25).

Breaking of Bread

This is a symbol of the Lord's supper which is a memorial meal, recalling Christ's life, death and resurrection for us. The bread is a symbol of Christ's body and the wine is a symbol of Christ's blood. Whenever we eat the bread and drink the wine we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Corinthians 11:17-30). Disciples of Christ should break bread as often as possible or at least once a week as the apostles did on a Sunday (Acts 20:7), as was commanded by Christ (Luke 22:17-20).

Prayer

The saying "Seven prayerless days makes one weak" is indeed very true. What a wonderful blessing we have in a communication link with our Creator 24 hours a day. We have a faithful mediator in Jesus who intercedes for us (1 Timothy 2:5, 1 John 2:1). There are many reasons why we need to pray - for the kingdom, for strength, in worship, in thankfulness, for those who are sick spiritually or physically, for safety, for guidance the list is endless. The Lord's prayer for example starts by asking God to bring about the Master Plan. *"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"* (Matthew 6:9,10). Not only does prayer improve our relationship with God and His Son but it gives us strength to walk on that narrow path which leads to His kingdom.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE MASTER PLAN

As citizens of the Master Plan we need to understand the foundations of this Plan. These foundations are essentially fundamental concepts of the new covenant. Here are three of the most important concepts of the Master Plan. We will discuss each in a little

more detail:

- Love
- Faith
- Grace

Love - the First and Greatest Commandment

Love is the most important aspect of God's plan with the earth. It is central to His character. It is the theme of His actions toward man. As would-be citizens of God's kingdom we need to learn to love. As we discussed in an earlier paragraph, Jesus explained that loving God and loving Man were the two most important commandments (Luke 10:27).

When God revealed his character to Moses in Exodus 34 you will remember that love was an important part of His character.

"The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in LOVE, and faithfulness." (Exodus 34:6)

Love must be our motivation for good works. If we develop love for God and our neighbours we will do good works not because it is our duty but because we want to. A good example of this are the righteous in Jesus' parable in Matthew 25. These righteous people had not remembered all the good deeds they had done. *"Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?" (Matthew 25:37)*. This had come naturally out of their care and love for their fellow man. Such is the love that citizens of God's Master Plan must learn to develop.

Faith - Essential for Righteousness

Faith is an essential characteristic to please God. The writer to the Hebrews defines faith as being;

"Sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1)

We have to develop a sureness about God's Master Plan. A confidence that it will happen! This faith is essential if we are to please God (Hebrews 11:6).

The important thing is that Faith is counted to us as righteousness. It is through our belief in God and our confidence in His plan, that is our faith, that God looks on us as righteous (Romans 4:5, 16-25).

Saved by Grace

The third foundation of the new covenant is Grace. Grace is God's divine gift which he offers to those who strictly speaking do not deserve it. The Bible makes it clear that we will only find a place in God's kingdom by Grace. We can try as hard as we like but we will never be able to reveal God's glory on our own. We cannot earn a place in God's kingdom. It is a gift (Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8).

Paul explains clearly in Ephesians 2:2-10 that we are saved by Grace and not by our own works. This concept actually has an important bearing on God's Master Plan. In fact faith and grace work hand-in-hand. It is through faith that we reach out to God for salvation, and it is through grace that God reaches out to save us - *"For it is by grace you have been saved through faith"* (Ephesians 2:8).

If it were possible to earn salvation, the world would be filled with people who had earned their own place in God's kingdom. The problem with this is that the glory for their position would really belong to them - they earned the right. God's intention is to fill the earth with His glory and not man's. If we are saved by God's grace then the glory is God's and all praise belongs to Him. This is what God has planned for and this is how it will be.

WHAT GUIDING PRINCIPLES DO WE HAVE?

As we travel through life we are bound to encounter issues where we will need to know where we stand as Christians. Before we look at specific issues we must realise that our most important guiding principle is love (1 Corinthians 13). This love is not a romantic love, it is a love that considers as first priority the spiritual well being of those around us. A love that motivated God to give His Son to die in order to give us eternal life (John 3:16).

PRINCIPLE - Christ is our King

When we are baptised into Christ we accept him as our King. We take on the principles and citizenship of the Kingdom of God. *"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Philippians 3:20).

Christians should submit to the government of the country they are in. *"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities,*

for there is no authority except that which God has established” (Romans 13:1). Christians should pay taxes and be honest in all their financial dealings. “Give everyone what you owe him: if you owe taxes pay taxes” (Romans 13:7). However the laws of God take priority (Acts 4:19).

Practice

- We have no part to play in politics as we have voted for Christ.
- We will only enter conflict at the command of Christ, until then we obey his command to love our enemies (John 18:36).

PRINCIPLE - God is in control

God is in control of not only our lives but also of the world. “.. *the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men*” (Daniel 4:17). God has promised that if we seek His kingdom as our first priority He will look after us (Matthew 6:33).

Practice

- We do not become involved in protest movements following the example Christ left for us (1 Peter 2:21).

PRINCIPLE - We bring Glory to God in our families

Marriage is sacred in the eyes of God. Like baptism it is a commitment for life. “*What God has joined together, let man not separate*” (Matthew 19:6).

Christians should bring up their children in a loving environment where the eternal principles are upheld and obeyed. “*Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:4).

Christians should only marry those who have the same commitment to Christ. Throughout the scriptures believers are warned that marrying an unbeliever will become a snare to them and could cause them to stumble. “*Do not be yoked together with unbelievers*” (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Practice

If we bring glory to God in our families we should avoid

- Divorce and remarriage (Matthew 5:31,32; 1 Corinthians 7:11,39).

- Homosexuality (Romans 1:26,27).
- Sex before marriage (1 Corinthians 6:18-20; 7:8,9,28).
- Pornography (Matthew 5:27-30; Romans 1:28-32).
- Adultery (Galatians 5:19-22; 1 Corinthians 6:9,10).

PRINCIPLE - Life is sacred

Only God can give life and so only God has the right to take life away. *“The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up”* (1 Samuel 2:6).

Practice

Murder is clearly wrong but this principle also affects other issues like:

- Abortion
- Suicide

PRINCIPLE - Love your neighbour as yourself

We have seen that this is an important principle which Christ requires from us.

Practice

- We do not go to the army as we are to love our enemies (Matthew 5:43-47).
- We do not have the right to murder, get angry and take vengeance (Matthew 5:21-26, Romans 12:19).
- We are to give to the needy (Matthew 6:1-4).
- We do not take others to court (1 Corinthians 6:7).

PRINCIPLE - Seeking first the kingdom of God

Christ tells us *“do not worry, saying ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”* (Matthew 6:31-33).

Practice

- We must not seek and pursue after worldly wealth (1 Timothy 6:6-10, Luke 12:18-22).
- We must not get ourselves entangled and absorbed in worldly

affairs (James 1:27).

PRINCIPLE - God dwells in us

For those who have been baptised our bodies are the temple where God dwells (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Practice

- We must honour God with our bodies and not defile them.
- We must flee from sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18).
- We must not lose control of our bodies to drink and drugs (1 Corinthians 5:11).

DOES GOD PROVIDE HELP?

The answer to this question is emphatically 'YES'. God has promised us that *"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you"* (Hebrews 13:5). We can take great comfort in knowing that God is watching over our lives. The ways in which He interacts with our lives are many and varied and we should never limit or predict the way God deals with us. God's intention with each of us is to mould our character as a potter moulds clay so that we reveal His character (Romans 9:20,21). This is of course the Master Plan and is ultimately to be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.

We will look at some of the ways God helps us on our journey to the Kingdom of God.

The Bible

The Bible is the essential message from God. It reveals to us the Master Plan and the character of God. Men of God were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write down God's message for all ages (2 Peter 1:21). It was written so that we would know the mind of God (1 Corinthians 2:9,10) and to guide and encourage us through life. *"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance and encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope"* (Romans 1:4).

The Bible is the inspired word of God and equips us to be part of the Master Plan. *"From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good*

work" (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

Prayer

Prayer is an open line of communication enabling us to turn to God for help. As we have seen, God wants us to turn and talk to him about our worries and anxieties (1 Peter 5:7).

Angels

God has many angels who are carrying out His will. Their purpose is to help us in our lives to reach God's kingdom. *"Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who inherit salvation?"* (Hebrews 1:14).

Experience

God shapes events in our lives to help us become more spiritual and to change our characters to become more like Him. *"For we know that in all things God works for the good of those that love Him"* (Romans 8:28).

Other Disciples

God can use other disciples to help us through hard times. For example in the life of Paul he used Titus. *"But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus"* (2 Corinthians 7:6). This is why fellowship is so important.

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the power of God that is set aside for furtherance the Master Plan. It is therefore very important in God's interaction with man. We have seen that the Holy Spirit was the power behind the Bible. It was instrumental in the birth of the key to the Master Plan - Jesus! It enabled Jesus and the apostles to perform miracles to testify that they were approved of God (Mark 16:20). We do not know how the Holy Spirit works in the world or in our lives. *"As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things"* (Ecclesiastes 11:5). What we have is the comfort of knowing that God is powerful and able to save us.

1. Claimed 'possession' of the Holy Spirit does not guarantee salvation (Matthew 7:21-23).
2. Many will falsely claim to possess the Holy Spirit (Matthew

24:24).

3. Men no longer exercise control over the miraculous powers of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 13:8).

4. It is important to realise that the power itself is nothing. The control behind the power, i.e. God, is what is important.

We have learned that:

- Christ requires a lifetime commitment from us in which we change our lives and follow his example.
- Conversion is a lifelong process turning us into people who reveal God's character and fulfil the Master Plan.
- We need to strive to practise God's principles on a daily basis.
- *"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us very great promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires"* (2 Peter 1:4).

How should a citizen of the Master Plan live?

We live a life as near to Christ's as possible, in faith and grace, motivated by love.

CONCLUSION:

This set of lessons has introduced you to the most important plan you will ever encounter. God's Master plan is for real. It is simple, easy to understand and will happen. Let's briefly review the things we have discovered concerning God's Master Plan.

In **Lesson 1** we found that God does have a plan for the earth. We can be sure that the earth will not end up as a desolate wasteland. God plans to fill the earth with His glory through men and women. It is both exciting and challenging that God needs people like us to make His plan a reality.

Lesson 2 explained how God is going to make sure His ultimate plan for the earth happens. The promises to Abraham and David, which were never completely fulfilled, speak of a future kingdom on earth. This kingdom will be ruled by Jesus Christ and will be the means by which God eventually fills the earth with His glory. Jesus Christ is coming back soon to set up this kingdom on earth!

In **Lesson 3** we looked at why we have a need for God's Master Plan. The simple reality is that we are all mortal dying creatures. Without God's plan we are destined for unconsciousness in the grave. Some hope to look forward to! God's Master Plan represents our escape from this destiny of death.

Faced with such a choice we might wonder why so many have chosen not to embrace God's Master Plan. **Lesson 4** provided the answer to what stops us from participating in God's Master Plan. Here we found that we are our own worst enemies. The bible is clear that our sinful nature is the greatest barrier between us and God. To participate in God's Master Plan we must overcome our sinful nature.

In **Lesson 5** we found that Jesus Christ is the key to God's Master Plan. All the promises relating to God's plan point forward to him as the special seed. Jesus Christ is the only man who has perfectly fulfilled God's purpose through his life. As a sinless man he revealed God's glory perfectly. As such he has become the first fruits of those who reveal God's glory - the key to the Master Plan.

The Master Plan centres around the Master Planner. The more we know about the Planner, the better we will understand His plan. In **Lesson 6** we learnt that the Master Planner is God, who

is revealed through His name, YHWH, and has chosen to be the Father of those who love Him.

Lesson 7 proposed one of the most personally challenging questions in this booklet. How can we participate in God's Master Plan? It's all very well gaining an understanding of God's Master Plan but if we don't do anything about it we will never enjoy its benefits. The bible is clear that God requires obedience from those who want to share in His wonderful plan. Having understood God's plan, we need to repent of our old way of life and then put on Jesus Christ through baptism..

God's Master Plan is all about changing the way people live. In **Lesson 8** we considered some of the characteristics and behaviours expected of citizens of God's Master Plan. The challenge is to live a life as near to that of Christ. We are blessed in that God will provide His grace where we fail.

God's Master Plan is in progress. There is nothing anybody can do to stop it. That is good news for us because it provides the most exciting future we could ever hope for. The challenge is not the future, it is the present. It is what we do now that will determine whether we are given the pleasure to witness the earth filled with the glory of God. May ours be the prayer of all those who lived for God's Master Plan:

"Even so come Lord Jesus...."