

The Plan

(Sermon Notes) By Warren Zehrung 7/27/2019

As far as the people in the world at large are concerned **Christianity** is a murky and obscure concept. They believe that they understand Jesus and the Bible, but they do not.

However, for a particular group that God calls His saints, **the truth** is not elusive at all. Brethren, we, the saints, the people of the Church of God, have been given the unique privilege of knowing more about Christianity and Godliness than the people in the world because God has given us an **overview** of what He is doing.

For a long time, what God is doing was a **mystery** to almost everyone. What God is doing is no longer hidden in **secrecy**. We are able to know much – a great deal – of what God has revealed to His saints up to now.

Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord God does **nothing** unless He reveals **His secret** to His servants the prophets.

It is God's prerogative to reveal the secrets of His Plan as it pleases Him to do so. His **Plan** will eventually impact everyone—some sooner and others later.

Deuteronomy 29:29 The **secret** things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are **revealed** belong **unto us** and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of His law.

The great majority of the people in the world have **not** heard that God has a Plan, or what the Plan of God is. It is a mystery to them.

God's Plan is in His word, the Bible, but it is a long and difficult task to figure out. For the world, it is **impossible** to figure out because of the many erroneous traditions and notions that are prevalent in society.

To begin to know what **God's secret** is, a chronological view of the Plan of God is needed. What is His Plan, how did it begin, how will it come to fruition, and what is God's intent? What is the **purpose** for which all things were created – this earth, the universe, and mankind's part in it?

When God called me to be a part of His Church I had some unrealistic expectations. When I first realized that God was calling me and giving me of His Spirit, I supposed that the Church of God would keep growing and growing. I thought that there would be a tremendous following in this lifetime – now – like when the huge multitudes from Galilee pursued Jesus in His public ministry. Great crowds followed Jesus everywhere He went.

Mark 3:7 Jesus withdrew Himself with His disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judaea,

Mark 3:20 And the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.

Forty, fifty, or more years ago the Church was growing rapidly – just like that! I fully expected the peace and hope of God’s way would be recognized by a great many as the **Gospel** went out to all nations. Back then, I thought that there would be sizeable congregations, consisting of **Spirit led saints** with whom to fellowship and provoke unto love and good works, in every town and city (Hebrews 10:24).

I also thought that God’s people would have their own lovely culture, customs, and music to replace that of the world. I fully expected that my own family, raised in the hope of that **vision** of God’s work on earth, would adopt the way and truth that leads to eternal Life (John 6:29).

In the 1970s, it seemed to me that the Eden-like beauty of the award winning Ambassador College grounds, the wholesome student body, and the motivation behind such Millennial quality, would be embraced by many, many people and be replicated and built upon, and spread widely.

Now, about a half century later, I recognize that those preliminary anticipations of mine were **not to be** – not in this lifetime, anyway.

God put His Plan **into effect** before there was a star in the sky! Of course, God knew all along that He would **call** and work with each of His Children from the **foundation of the world** (John 14:17; Romans 8:29). God **predetermined** to call us before the **foundation of the world**. Let me show you how far back **our calling** goes:

Ephesians 1:4 According as He [God the Father] has chosen **us** in Him [Jesus Christ] before the **foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love:

Ephesians 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption [*Sonship*] of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

It is now evident that my **idealistic** vision of the end-time Church of God is not to be. Jesus knew that there would be only a weak and small flock, barely viable, at His return. Jesus said:

Luke 18:8 I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Never the less, when the Son of man comes, shall He **find faith** on the earth?

In the end-time, God’s true saints will be scattered in an archipelago of small bands, united only by His Spirit (Ephesians 4:4).

Even within the larger church corporations of big cities there will be few who practiced true Christianity. The Lord says to us as He did through the Prophet Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 3:14 Turn, O backsliding children, says the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you **one** of a city, and **two** of a family, and I will bring you to Zion. (Matthew 18:20)

It is only **God’s people** who know and practice His way of Truth.

After being brought up in, and having escaped from this world’s educational and religious systems, **we know** that among God’s people we have found the “pearl of great price,” and to the best of our ability, we desire to share this precious wisdom with those scattered brethren who are and will be called to God’s way and knowledge of the Truth (Matthew 13:46; 2Peter 1:4).

Everyone of us must decide for ourselves what our **informed** understanding will be. The Bible is the living word of God, and as such, the spiritual lessons contained therein, cannot be exhausted. The Word of God has so much more to it than most people are willing to acknowledge. The Bible is a gold mine – but we have to dig for the thousands of hidden tiny nuggets—the solid doctrinal content.

We will never find all of the Godly wisdom that is contained within Scripture – because it is a spiritual living document – meaning that it contains more Truth than we can ever fathom.

Through His Holy Spirit in a converted Christian, God leads us to the **deeper** meanings. I fully hope and expect that those who have a zeal for God’s truth will continue to clarify, expound, explain, illuminate and teach this understanding of the present Truth that God has given us (2Peter 1:12).

Beginning about 100 years ago—early last century—there began a large outpouring of God’s Spirit around the world. Today, however, true Christians find themselves a “vanishing breed.” The **zeal** which characterized the spread of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ during the last century is **seriously diminishing**.

In the same way that the Church of the first century left a record of its acts and beliefs for us, it is fitting that our generation set down a legacy to those who will follow after us. A time is coming soon when this **precious truth** that we are privileged to know and live—will not be widely available.

Amos 8:11 Behold, the days come, says the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of **hearing the words of the Lord**.

We still take for granted that we will hear a prepared Sabbath sermon every week. Brethren, the handwriting is on the wall.

Because of ever increasing religious persecution on the people of God, and restrictions upon God’s word, it is necessary that the vital understandings we cherish be preserved.

At this point in time, less than one percent of the earth’s population knows that God **has** a Plan, let alone what the **Plan of God** is.

God’s Plan is a **mystery** to the world – the Bible says so – as we will see.

We in God’s Church know that He is creating us to be His sons and daughters to be with Him in His eternal Family forever more.

God is reproducing Himself. Very few people see this mystery in the Holy Scriptures. And sadly, except for here and there, this valuable information is not being passed along to the **next generation** so that those who want to know it will have it available to them.

God’s Plan is an eternal Plan (Ephesians 3:11). It is most important that this vital knowledge of the **Plan of God** be preserved for those with whom God is working.

God in His perfect wisdom has not revealed the entirety of Godly truth to man all at once. He imparts certain wisdom that He wants His Church brethren to profit by according to His own schedule and purposes—that’s what the Bible calls, “the present truth,” when it’s received and understood.

It is not that the Truth of God changes. No. It is a matter of what God reveals to His Church at any given time. For example, we have been shown God's **commanded Holy Days** that were forgotten for so long. But, can you imagine the difficulty of traveling **a long distance** to the Feast of Tabernacles in the 1600s or 1700s in the days of horse and buggy.

The English Bible was just becoming available to pilgrims and explorers who plied the seven seas in sailing ships. God was preparing a people on every continent to receive the end-time preaching of the Gospel of His coming Kingdom. Our commission to **preach** the Good News of the coming Kingdom of God **remains**.

Matthew 24:14 This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be **preached** in **all the world** for a witness unto all nations; and **then** shall the end come.

But in our **present** generation of cars and planes we can more easily travel to distant Feast sites—so God has given us the **present** truth of the Holy Days.

It should come as no surprise that **true** Biblical wisdom is unique to those in a **right relationship** with God, but not to everyone.

In Matthew 24:5 Jesus said that “many would be deceived” by those who **preach Christ**.

A sure sign of the fulfillment of that prophecy is how many “Christians” today believe that they **cannot be deceived**. The first century Church of God had Biblical truth and understanding that was subsequently lost to the confused world, but not to the true saints of God. The apostle Peter wrote about the **present truth**:

2Peter 1:12 I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the **present truth**.

It is this “**present truth**” which the Church of God possesses today that must be preserved as much as possible for those who will come after us. God's Sabbath and Holy Days have been taught and believed by the true Church brethren since the days of Jesus and the New Testament Church. However, we are now living in an increasingly hostile environment which is not conducive to the truth of God.

Schools, institutions of higher learning, even the so-called religious leaders of our day do not possess this priceless information – the **Truth** of God.

They do not know how to properly weigh the Biblical meanings of the Feasts of the Lord, ceremonies, symbols, figures and patterns that are so plentiful in the Scriptures.

Little by little, God revealed parts of His Plan to the prophets of old—leading up to Jesus Christ who gave the greater meaning to His disciples (Matthew 13:11). Thankfully, there have been those in the Church of God community who have compiled a great deal of this Biblical knowledge for the benefit of others. God gives His spiritually deep core truth only to His faithful saints.

1Corinthians 2:14 The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: For they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are **spiritually discerned**.

This **foolish** world thinks a “**spiritual moment**” is an emotive **moment** in life that moves one to tears, or a soothing sentimental harmony of **peaceable bliss**, or an emotional experience that will take your breath away, or a **touching** incident that fills you with elation.

“**Spiritual**” in the Bible means so much more than that! God is Spirit, and He exists in a **spiritual realm** that supersedes our physical realm (John 4:24). **Christian faith** traverses the breach that divides God’s realm from that of mankind. Jesus told His disciples to go and teach all nations.

Jude, the half-brother of Jesus, charged the Church brethren to earnestly **contend** for the Christian faith and teachings which were once delivered unto them.

Jude 1:3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should **earnestly contend for the faith** which was once delivered unto the saints.

Paul also urged Timothy to teach Christianity as he, himself, had been taught.

2Timothy 3:14-15 You **continue** in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them; And that from a child you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you **wise unto salvation** through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Over the centuries, much information was subsequently lost to secular history beginning during the lives of the apostles themselves. Even the first century Church of God suffered from apostasy—as the Church brethren today are being affected. The apostles fought against the false information that was polluting the true Gospel message of Jesus Christ, and causing some to break faith with God the Father. Paul wrote:

Galatians 1:6-7 I am astonished that ye are so soon removed from [God the Father] who called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel, which is not another [but a false gospel].

Only a very few people are chosen to have this wonderful good news at their fingertips. When asked if there were **very few** that would be saved, Jesus responded:

Luke 13:23-24 Do your utmost to enter in at the narrow gate: For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, but shall not be able.

We should have a **red flag** of warning in our margins next to that verse. The Bible is the source and basis of all doctrine. The Bible is the ultimate authority. The story of the Bible is how **darkness** is conquered by **light** (Genesis 1:1-3).

The Bible alone establishes the course to that true **Light**—Jesus Christ. All people living in this evil world have been deceived and led into spiritual darkness by **false** religion, by their own human reason, by the intelligentsia, by the politicians in government, but most of all by Satan himself (Revelation 12:9). Even today’s Pope has joined into the common refrain that, “One religion is as good as another—just different paths to the same God.”

Jesus taught the opposite: In Matthew 7:14 He said the opposite:

“... difficult is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it.”

It is important for us to find the answer to the **mystery of God's Plan** which was **kept secret** since the world began (Romans 16:25). God is bringing mankind – **according to His Plan** – out of abysmal **darkness** into His glorious **light**. Paul said:

1Corinthians 2:7 We speak the wisdom of God in a **mystery**, even the **hidden** wisdom, which God ordained **before the world** unto our glory.

Mainstream religion, college campuses, and political think-tanks lack the knowledge of the **Plan of God**. **If** they had that knowledge, they would want to bottle it up and sell it to you **for a profit** as TV evangelists do (Proverbs 23:23). On the other hand, God's people find page after page in the Bible opening up to their understanding. It all ties together so well. God has revealed the **Plan of God** to His saints by His Holy Spirit:

1Corinthians 2:9-10 For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

We need to know **God's Plan** for us. It is far superior to anything we can possibly imagine. Let's ask ourselves the question, "Who is God and what is He doing?" Those are good questions to consider. It is not possible to have faith in God without knowing about Him, and what is **important — to Him**.

No **wise man** would begin to build a project without a **good plan** in mind. An architect would not design and create a project without a **solid** idea of its purpose. He needs to know if it will be a home, a cathedral, a museum or some other structure. He **must** have **a plan** before he begins.

God works the same way: He is the Master Architect of the earth and the universe – but, what is His purpose in creating them? What is God's ultimate objective, and how is He carrying out His Plan?

God tells us that the earth is a temporary residence for mankind's **training** while he is being created in an ongoing process into His glorious image and likeness. Why are people so surprised to find out that God, Himself, has a **Plan**?

The discovery of this knowledge of a hidden mystery is a stunning eye-opener to those who have been living in the dark. Surprisingly, a **full** understanding of God's intentions was not made known to the prophets of old who foretold them, but it was revealed to the New Testament apostles and subsequently to the Church brethren.

God is not calling most people at this time – they are only learning the hard lesson that **man's way** does not work. It is good for us to have the overall picture of what God **has** done, **is** doing and **will do** in bringing about His eternal Plan. The apostle Paul explained in Ephesians 3 how God Himself had **revealed** His mysterious Plan to him.

Ephesians 3:2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given **to me** for you:

...To be passed on to us, brethren.

Ephesians 3:3 How that by **revelation, He made known unto me the mystery**; (as I wrote before in few words,

Ephesians 3:4 Whereby, when **you read** [it], you may understand my knowledge in the **mystery of Christ**)

Ephesians 3:5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it **is now revealed** unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

And so it became obvious that God has shown **His Plan** to many in order to ascertain if they will either live their lives in accordance to the will of God, or follow their own whims. Paul tells us that God's Plan is being made known to the **Church brethren**—the true saints!

Colossians 1:26 Even **the mystery which has been hidden** from ages and from generations, but **now** is made manifest to **His saints**.

The mystery of God's Plan is shown to the Church brethren. When Jesus was carrying out His three-and-a-half-year public ministry He began to **reveal** His Father—God the Father—and this mystery that had been so long hidden.

Mark 4:11 [Jesus] said unto His disciples, unto you it is given **to know the mystery** of the Kingdom of God.

The **Plan of God** is hidden in clear view in the pages of the Bible.

As Paul says, "the veil remains" over the minds of those who do not believe (2Corinthians 3:14).

God instituted His **Plan of Salvation** for mankind **before** the foundation of this world. God is not capriciously "tweaking" His Plan as He goes along. He is not making **adjustments** along the way. God's Plan was fixed and resolved before He began the creation.

God **unilaterally** promised Abraham that His Plan would be fulfilled in him. The staggering Plan of God is unfolding before our eyes.

1Peter 1:18 Forasmuch as you know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conduct received by tradition from your fathers;

1Peter 1:19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

1Peter 1:20 Who verily was foreordained **before the foundation of the world**, but was manifest **in these last times** for you.

God's Plan has been there since before Adam and Eve – but He is making it known **to us** in these last days.

The Sabbath **keeping and observing**—Church of God—has a deep and rich historical narrative of doctrinal understanding built squarely on the foundational understanding from the Holy Bible. Without this understanding, we cannot properly interpret prophecy. Precious truth that is much too wonderful for the human mind to conceive of, is made known in the pages of the Bible:

The origin of life; the spirit world; creation of the earth and the heavens; the nature of God Himself; eternal salvation and the Plan of God.

The question is, "How do they all fit together?" God Planned, and is implementing each step of the way, not only to bring us to this very point in time, but to establish His sovereign rule over the entire earth.

At this point in time, the process of God's Plan is **by no means** complete. In fact, God continues to **generously** divulge more and more of **His Plan** to us as we approach the return of Jesus Christ. Notice how God promised to reveal so much to us in the end-time:

Daniel 12:4 Thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and **seal the book**, even to the time of the end.

We are privileged to have the knowledge of God's Plan that He has opened up to the saints in this last century. God has painted a picture throughout the Bible of His wonderful Plan. Point by point He is showing His called out ones exactly how He is working out His Plan of salvation, not only for the Church of God brethren today, but eventually for all of mankind.

Extremely few people realize that **God has a Plan**—but God's saints are sanctified (set-apart for a special purpose) to know His Plan by the many points of truth revealed in the Bible. The Holy Scriptures contain all the information necessary for salvation because it is the living Word of God—the absolute Truth.

The **saving** of mankind became necessary because everyone has sinned and come short of the glory of God and is deserving of death (Romans 3:23, 6:23). Jesus Christ Himself makes it possible to overturn a sinner's guilty verdict and subsequent death penalty and grant him salvation.

There is no other Book that contains the means by which man can be saved, and that is because the Bible is inspired—that is, God breathed. The Bible is a gift from God. God spoke it. That means God **inspired** His words as they were being written down.

2Peter 1:21 Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

God's people believe in the inerrancy of Scripture in the **original** manuscripts. (which we do not possess anymore.)

All of our beliefs are based on the Bible, and nothing but the Bible. In coming to a knowledge of God's truth the challenge **for us** is to see the big picture, **the whole picture**, without **breaking** a single Scripture.

John 10:35 ... Scripture cannot be **broken**.

The Bible is our guide to becoming like God—putting on His Godly Character.

It is God's desire that His people strive to have complete moral character—just as Jesus is perfect:

Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto **a perfect man**, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

We will never become entirely perfect in this lifetime—but we must strive with every bit of strength we have to do so. It is only by God's Spirit working in us that we can become **God-like**.

2Timothy 3:15 ...The Holy Scriptures are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

2Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

2Timothy 3:17 That the man of God may **be perfect**, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

The Bible is actually the word of God originally written on parchment. Today it is in print and available to everyone – at our fingertips. God has conveyed details of **His Plan** to those men of old who were inspired by Him “a little here and a little there” (Isaiah 28:10). When the prophets wrote Scripture down, most of it was **not** understandable to them. They did not possess the framework to put it all together. Today, we have that framework.

The **meaning** of God’s words that the prophets originally inscribed on parchments – the dried skins of animals – was **not revealed** to them and they were **unable** to see the entire **salvational Plan** and perspective that God is now revealing to His saints. Over time, and especially in this era of the Church, God is making known that which He had previously **hidden in plain sight**.

A lot of people think that they know what the Bible says – but they do not. But, the brethren of God’s Church now have the opportunity **to know** what the ancient men of God longed to have a glimpse into.

1Peter 1:10 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and **searched diligently**, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:

1Peter 1:11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the **glory that should follow**.

That term, “glory” has to do with the future brilliant glorified state of those resurrected spirit beings who will have attained to everlasting life.

The very Plan of God from before the foundation of the world was and is for the Children of God to obtain **glorious** eternal life in the Family of God. But, in order to do so, each individual’s character and image must be dramatically made over and greatly enhanced to conform to the image of God. God is sharpening and perfecting His character in those who believe Him and humbly yield to His will. Notice the description of the glorious resurrected Jesus Christ:

Hebrews 1:3 The Son [Jesus Christ] is the brightness [radiance] of God's **glory** and the exact representation of His image.

In Jesus’ prayer to His Father the night before He died, He requested that His **former glory** be restored to Him:

John 17:3-5 This is life eternal, that [the saints] might know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent... And now, O Father, **glorify** me with your own self, with the **glory** that I had with you before the world existed.

Everyone who seeks the Kingdom of God in righteousness will inherit everlasting **life in glory**. Jesus told Peter and the other disciples:

Matthew 19:29 Everyone that has forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

From the beginning it was **God's Plan**, not to only provide man with a temporary physical life, but to create man in a way that he might obtain **glorious eternal God life**.

Titus 1:2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, **promised** before the world began.

How did Paul know that God promised **glorious eternal God life** before He ever began the creation process? The answer is, Paul knew and believed the words of Jesus: for example:

Matthew 25:34 [Jesus said,] ...Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Paul told the Ephesian Church how he had been appointed by the Creator through a personal revelation, to shed light on **God's Plan** for all mankind. And not only for mankind, but also for the angelic realm, **enlightening** them about this mysterious Plan that God had kept secret from the very beginning. Not only did the Prophets of old **not** understand God's Plan – Paul tells us that the **angels** did **not** understand God's Plan – either.

It was God's purpose in making His Plan known that, through the Church brethren, all the unseen rulers and powers in heavenly places would at last realize God's plentiful wisdom in its rich variety. All of this is in accordance with His eternal Plan, which He is carrying out through Christ Jesus our Lord. Paul explained it this way:

Ephesians 3:3 It was by a revelation that the secret mystery was made known to me ...

Ephesians 3:9 To make all men see what is the **Plan of [God]**, the **mystery hidden for ages** in God who created all things;

Ephesians 3:10 To the intent [that through (because of) the Church brethren] the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 3:11 This was according to the eternal purpose [God's Plan] which He has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord.

With the institution of God's Church, and with the guidance and intervention of God's Spirit, His Plan was **revealed** to the New Testament Church brethren.

There is so much more of the incredible facets of God's Plan as revealed in the Holy Scriptures that we must explore. **Christian faith** traverses the breach that divides God's realm from that of mankind. In my next sermon we will follow Jude's instruction to contend for **The Original Faith** which was once delivered unto the saints.

End: The Plan