

The years of waiting for God to fulfill his promises weighed heavily on the righteous remnant who longed to be free from the oppression of sin and Gentile rule. Jesus came to fulfill every promise God had made. As a son of Abraham, he would bless all the nations who blessed him. As the son of David, he would be the righteous ruler who would bring an end to sin.

In preaching the good news of the kingdom, Jesus was declaring that God's promises were true and fulfillment was near. But God did not intend to give his kingdom to his enemies; the seed of the serpent would be crushed and not blessed. The command to repent was a call to join God's side. When the nation collectively refused to repent and submit to God's demands, Jesus prepared for a new community that would be his faithful witness in the world. When Israel crucified its Messiah in rejection of his message, Jesus established a blood-bought body of Jews and Gentiles to bring the good news of God's plan to the whole world. Neither the execution of the Messiah nor the establishment of the church precluded God's intention to redeem this earth, and after a time during which God patiently waits for men to be saved (while the wheat and tares grow to maturity), Jesus will return to earth to destroy those who scorned his sacrifice and establish his glorious rule for the faithful. The church today bears witness to the world of God's desire that all be saved, and it provokes a God-forsaken Israel to jealousy and repentance.

When Jesus returns, he will fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant by blessing all nations, the Davidic Covenant by establishing an eternal rule of righteousness, and the New Covenant by giving Israel submissive hearts. Jesus will accomplish God's original purpose in creation by ruling over this earth, together with his vice-regents, in harmony with God's will. Thus the curse will be lifted and the groaning of creation will cease. Jesus will rule perfectly for 1,000 years subduing all of God's enemies and casting the serpent into eternal exile before handing over the kingdom to the Father. This will usher in the eternal rule of God in which there is no sin or death but only glorious joy in the presence of God as his faithful ones rule over the new creation for ever and ever.

## **GOD'S PURPOSE IN CREATION: A SUMMARY**

### **PREPARATION FOR THIS STUDY**

How would you answer the question, What is the Bible all about? Think through the unfolding of God's plan in Scripture and identify his primary purposes, turning points, and fulfillments. How would you summarize the Bible if you had one hour?

### **GOD'S PURPOSE IN CREATION**

In the beginning, God created the universe to display his glory to the ones he made in his image. Man and woman were given the earth to rule and to fill with their offspring, with all enjoying the presence of God in their midst. But the decision to seek satisfaction outside of God led to separation from God, a curse on the earth (to rule) and childbearing (to fill), and physical death. Yet even as he was speaking judgment, God promised redemption by declaring that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent. Even so the sin of man would pervade Adam's descendants so that only a righteous remnant would submit to God. Mankind's war against God would not be stopped though God destroyed the earth with a flood and scattered mankind with confusion of languages. So God chose a family to bring blessing to the earth.

Abraham and his barren wife were promised innumerable seed and a strategic piece of real estate by which God would reach the nations of the world. But the patient process by which God worked through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants would demonstrate God's glory through weak and sinful creatures. Through Abraham God revealed the need for faith in order to be justified. Through Isaac God revealed his sovereign choice of the seed (Jacob, not Esau). Through Jacob God showed his pleasure in redeeming even a deceitful usurper. Through Judah God identified his choice of a king as one who would lay down his life for his brothers.

The family of Abraham became the nation of Israel outside of the land God had promised to them. Through the oppression of the Egyptians Jacob's numerous descendants learned to cry out to God for salvation and God delivered Israel by humbling the mightiest nation on earth. Israel was led out of Egypt and to a new relationship with God. At Mount Sinai the nation of Israel was bound to God in a suzerain-vassal covenant whereby the people would be blessed if they obeyed the laws of their King. The intention of the Mosaic Covenant was to accomplish the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant: Israel was to bless all the nations of the world by being a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. God came down to live in the midst of the twelve tribes when the tabernacle was constructed and laws concerning his holiness were implemented. The world was to marvel at a wise and understanding nation whose God was near them.

But the Mosaic Covenant did not of itself provide regenerated hearts, and the laws that would sanctify the individual submitted to God would only increase the sinfulness of those who worshiped other gods. The sinful condition of the majority of the nation led first to the judgment in the wilderness and later to the divine prediction that Israel would be exiled from the land God was about to give them.

The book of Joshua shows the possibilities when the nation is faithful, for God fights for Israel and gives the people rest in the land. The book of Judges shows what happens when the nation ignores the covenant and pursues other gods. The nation clearly needs a righteous king, but it is not clear where one could come from in this wicked nation. Yet the book of Ruth shows a righteous family who will produce a godly king.

The first king Saul reveals the type of ruler that sinful Israel desires and the result is disaster. God's choice of David provides a submissive but imperfect king who is the prototype of an heir who would accomplish all that God had promised. Through the Davidic Covenant, the Lord promised to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant by

establishing David's descendant on the throne of Israel forever. David writes many psalms for his righteous heir who will meditate on God's word day and night, perfectly fulfill God's commands, but also suffer for the sins of others before being raised to life again. His successor Solomon demonstrates much that God desires in a wise king ruling over his creation but his ultimate quest to find satisfaction in the creation apart from the Creator dooms his kingdom.

The history of the nations of Israel and Judah consistently show man's unfaithfulness and God's faithfulness. Wicked kings are punished, but God preserves the line of David and raises up prophets to call the nation to repent and to elaborate on his promises for those who do. Against the backdrop of idolatrous rulers, the promise of a godly king who will fulfill the Davidic covenant becomes increasingly more prominent. Isaiah predicts a virgin-born child whose righteous reign will never end. He will lead Israel out of exile by atoning for their sins by his innocent death. Jeremiah describes the New Covenant that God will make with Israel, granting them new hearts to obey him fully. Ezekiel promises that despite exile Israel will live again, the temple will be rebuilt, and God will live with his people.

The hope that this will occur when Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon was destroyed (in 539 BC) is clarified by later prophets. Daniel revealed that Babylon was but the first of four world empires who would subjugate Israel before God would establish his kingdom on earth. At that time one like a Son of Man would receive the kingdom and bring in everlasting righteousness. Haggai explained that the lack of blessing was owing to disobedience, but God would surely fulfill his promises for a glorious temple, a righteous people, and a Davidic king. Zechariah called the people to obey with visions of God living among his people in a restored Jerusalem after Israel repented for piercing the shepherd-king. Esther shows how God is at work protecting his people through natural (providential, but not miraculous) means. This was the state of affairs for 400 years until God sent his Son.