

God's Purpose for Humanity

Have you ever wished that you could have a second chance—maybe even live your life over again? Have you missed a life-changing opportunity and wished that you could have that opportunity one more time? Some people might say, “Definitely, yes!” Knowing what you now know and given the opportunity, would you correct something in your life? Certainly, an opportunity to “get things right” would make a second chance even more appealing.

Actually, an opportunity to “get things right” is available! God is offering it to you right now.

Would you like to live on an earth where everything works the way it should? Would you like to live among people who know you and always treat you with love, honor, and respect? In a place where you are free to succeed in your endeavors, where you will not be disappointed in your efforts or the efforts of those around you? Where instead of ridicule, suffering, or misery, there is praise, triumph, and glory? Where sin has no place, and where death has no power? Would you like to live where love and life are everlasting? Such an earth existed at the beginning of creation.

The good news is that, one day in the future, God will create the New Earth, and He is offering us the opportunity to be part of His restoration of all things.

God created mankind to be His offspring made in His image. Originally, God provided a wonderful home for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God intended that they would be part of His family, be known by His name, imitate Him, and carry on His work. Nevertheless, Adam disobeyed God's command and, in doing so, rejected God's purpose for mankind. As a result, man ruined much of what God had prepared for him. Thus, humans have caused their own pain and suffering as well as the corruption of the world around them.

The good news of God's gospel message is that He sent His Son to be the Messiah to give mankind a second chance. God is working to fulfill the original purpose for which He created us, and He has a plan of salvation offering us the opportunity to be part of His family.

Describing God's Purpose for Humanity

God's purpose for humanity is seen in His initiative to make a people for His name by including us in His family. God is a better father than any human father could possibly be (Mt 7:7-11). Similar to what any good father wants for his family, God's initiative includes at least four major elements: 1) his offspring are made in his image; 2) his offspring are to be known by his name; 3) his offspring are to mature to imitate the characteristics of their father; and 4) his offspring are to inherit the father's place and carry on his name and his good work (doing similar beneficial deeds).

Made in His Image

God's purpose to make a people for His name is much the same as any man having offspring—to have children who are made in his image. God's desire to have a people for His name is evident in His initial creation. After creating a special place in which

His human offspring could thrive, God created His offspring in His own likeness and image¹ so that they would be similar to Him (Gen 1:26-27). “For we are also His offspring. Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone” (Acts 17:28-29).

Generally, offspring look like their parents. Just as God created Adam to bear His likeness and image, when Adam's own son was born, the son bore Adam's “likeness” and “image” (Gen 5:1-3).

Known by His Name

God's purpose to make a people for His name is much the same as a man having offspring who are known by his name. Adam was created to be a son of God and part of God's family; naturally, Adam would be named “Adam, the son of God” (Lk 3:38). Likewise, Adam's son became part of Adam's family and inherited Adam's name, “Seth, the son of Adam” (Lk 3:38). The ancients who sought after God were also known by His name (Gen 4:26; 5:22-24).²

Imitate His Character

God's purpose to make a people for His name includes the idea that His offspring are to imitate His character, to act as He acts, and to become godly like Him. From the beginning, God set an example for Adam, teaching Adam to become like Him, just as good parents teach their sons and daughters to imitate them. A righteous man is to reflect God's light (Mt 5:14-16).

Speaking to the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus explains the principle that a son does the will of his father: “You do the

¹ After Adam's sin, his descendants still retained the image of God (Gen 9:6). Also, Jesus Christ, “[the Son of God] is the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15), “being the brightness of [God's] glory and the express image of His person” (Heb 1:3). Based on this fact, Jesus told His disciples, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9).

² Concerning the phrase “sons of God,” cf. Gen 6:2, 4; Ps 82:6; Mal 2:10; Mt 5:9, 45; Lk 3:38; Acts 17:29; 1Jn 3:10.

deeds of your father. . . . If God were your Father, you would love Me. . . . [But] you are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do” (Jn 8:41-42). John further clarified, “In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not [produce] righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother” (1Jn 3:10).

Inherit His Place

God’s purpose to make a people for His name includes the idea of inheritance. Offspring generally inherit the father’s place, carrying on the family’s name, its work, and its place in society. Thus, since Adam was part of God’s royal family, God appointed him to possess Earth as his inheritance and to rule as King of Earth, acting as God’s viceroy³ (Gen 1:26-28; Ps 8:4-8).

Therefore, God’s creation of the original Earth was not a temporary measure to hold humanity until He could prepare some of them to live with Him in Heaven. Earth was a vassal state (a subservient domain) of the Kingdom of God and the essential dwelling place which God specially designed for His human children. God did not create Earth just because He wanted more territory to rule, neither did God create Adam because He needed additional servants to do His bidding.

God created humans to be His children so that they could enjoy the presence of their heavenly Father. Furthermore, learning from their Creator, they could become mature in godliness like their divine Father. God designed the material universe to give His human offspring purpose, that is, to give them a place to do work similar to His work, specifically, to

³ Viceroy is used (instead of viceregent) because it more exactly describes God’s appointment of Adam as King of Earth. A “viceregent” is an administrative deputy exercising delegated power on behalf of the sovereign who appointed him, whereas a “viceroy” is a regal official who runs a country or province in the name of and as representative of the sovereign who appointed him.

give His royal family an inheritance to rule in righteousness just as God rules His Kingdom in righteousness.

God's purpose when He created mankind to be His family was to create offspring who would share His divine name, reflect His divine nature, and do His divine will. God making a people for His name is the unifying theme of Scripture, starting in Genesis 1 and concluding in Revelation 22.

Therefore, God created man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, desiring that mankind would live there and be His family known by His name. Man was to flourish in the loving provision of his divine Father. Having the perfect Creator for his Father, man was to learn to imitate Him; man's intellect would have

become greatly expanded and his achievements would have been nearly unlimited. The whole universe could have been man's playground, and light-years of travel would have been a small obstacle for humans who would live forever.

Chapter 2 will examine man's rebellion, which resulted in his alienation from God and the loss of his place and responsibilities as the divinely appointed King of Earth. When Adam obeyed the words of Satan instead of obeying the words of God, his actions proved him disloyal to his heavenly Father. As consequences of man's sin, the Garden of Eden no longer exists, the universe is corrupted with death, and man is broken and no longer able to fulfill God's purpose.

The Kingdom of God

In the Bible, this phrase describes the central kingdom (city) where God resides and rules all of His dominion. The Kingdom of God is identified by the placement of His throne and dwelling (currently in Heaven, Mt 5:34; 6:9). The New Jerusalem, the central kingdom on the New Earth, becomes the everlasting Kingdom of God (Rev 21:3, 24; 22:1). Of course, God has the right to rule over all of His creation (Dan 4:31-37). At times, He gives others the right to rule parts of His dominion. For examples, humans (i.e., Adam) were granted rule over Earth, and Satan will rule over the Lake of Fire (Mt 25:41).

Chapter 3 will provide an overview of God's plan of salvation, which will yet accomplish His original purpose for mankind. God will restore His righteous rule over Earth, and He still desires to include us in His family. In order to accomplish this, God has promised to rescue creation, including mankind, from the evil effects of man's sin and to restore everything on Earth, including man's dominion over it. God's plan of salvation includes the creation of a new Earth and another special place similar to the Garden of Eden.

Accomplishing God's Purpose for Humanity

The initial chapters of Genesis reveal God's purpose for humanity. Most of the rest of the Bible records God's interaction with mankind in order to accomplish His purpose for humanity. The ultimate accomplishment of His purpose for humanity is described in the final chapters of Revelation.

Interestingly, what is commonly called "salvation" is not God's primary purpose for humanity. Salvation is only a contingency which became necessary once man sinned and ruined the world which God had created for him. God was not surprised by man's rebellion but had already planned for this contingency before the creation of the earth (cf. Acts 2:22-24; 1Pet 1:19-20; Rev 13:8). Although men and angels might try, no one can stop God from accomplishing His purpose for humanity.

God Created Man to be His Family

So, what was God's original purpose for humanity? As explained previously, God's original purpose for humanity was, and still is, to make "a people for His name" (Acts 15:14). In other words, God wants us to be part of His family; He wants us to be His children (Jn 1:12) and for us to call Him and treat Him as "our Father."⁴

⁴ Mt 6:9; Lk 11:2; Rom 1:7; 8:15; 1Cor 1:3; 8:6; 2Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3, 4; 4:6; Eph 1:2, 17; 5:20; 6:23; Phil 1:2; 4:20; Col 1:2; 1Th 1:1, 3; 3:11,

This concept that God desires to be “the God of His people” and “to make a people for His name” is expressed in many different ways throughout the Bible. This theme germinates in God’s objective in the creation of mankind: “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness” (Gen 1:26); it blooms when He makes provision for His new family in the Garden of Eden.

It is possible to discern the elements of a marriage covenant in God’s provision for mankind in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 2, God provides for Adam and Eve in a way similar to how a husband is to provide for his wife. First, even though the whole earth was a wonderful place, God prepares a special dwelling place (the Garden of Eden) for His family. God then provides them with food (fruit from the trees), clothes them with righteous innocence, and comes every evening to have intimate fellowship with them. The Old Covenant required a husband to make such provisions for his wife (Ex 21:10-11).

When Adam and Eve sin, they are cast out of the special dwelling place which God made for them. (This is similar to a husband barring an unfaithful wife from living in his house.)

Years later, the Bible reports that God is grieved to see all the wickedness on the earth, many of the “sons of God” not behaving like their Father Creator (Gen 6:1-6). In a worldwide flood, God cleanses man’s wickedness from the earth and begins again with Noah and his family. Nevertheless, mankind soon rebels again and unites against Him, and God judges them accordingly (Gen 9-11).

God Called Abraham and His Descendants to be His Family

To accomplish His purpose for humanity, God begins yet again with Abraham, promising to bless him (Gen 12:1-3). God commands him, “walk before Me and be perfect,” and makes an everlasting Covenant with Abraham and his descendants. In a covenant, God promises to make Abraham fruitful and the

13; 2Th 1:1, 2; 2:16; 1Tim 1:2; 2Tim 1:2; Ti 1:4; Phm 1:3; 1Jn 1:3; 2Jn 3.

father of many nations, to give his seed an everlasting inheritance, and to be their God; they are to be His people⁵ (Gen 17:1-14).

God repeatedly uses familial terms to describe Abraham's descendants. Over one hundred times in the Old Testament, God calls the Israelites "My people," indicating that they are to be His family. For example, "I will take you as My people [as a man takes a wife], and I will be your God" (Ex 6:7). Reminiscent of His visits with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, God says, "I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be My people" (Lev 26:12).⁶

As a good father cares for his family, God cares for the Israelite people. When God rescues them from Egypt, He says, "Israel is My son, My firstborn" (Ex 4:22; cf. Hos 11:1) and "I carried [Israel] on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself" (Ex 19:4).

God protects Israel as a husband looks after his youthful bride:

I remember how faithful you were when you were young,
 how you loved me when we were first married;
 You followed me through the desert,
 through a land that had not been planted.
 Israel, you belonged to me alone;
 you were my sacred possession.
 I sent suffering and disaster
 on everyone who hurt you.
 I, the LORD, have spoken (Jer 2:2-3 GNT).

God also promises to dwell with His people and directs the Israelites to build a sanctuary for Him (Ex 15:17; 25:8; 29:45-46; Num 35:34). God explains that He will give them rest from their enemies and choose a place for His name to dwell among them; there they will come to worship Him (Dt 12:10-12). Thus, after giving King David rest and directing Solomon to build His

⁵ In the Bible, the word "people" often denotes one's "family" (e.g., Mk 3:21).

⁶ The following are some other occasions when God promises to be Israel's God: 2Sam 7:24; Isa 46:4-6; Jer 7:23; 11:4; 30:22; 36:28.

Temple in Jerusalem, God says: "I will dwell among the children of Israel and will not forsake My people" (1Ki 6:13).

In spite of God's loving affections, the Israelites eventually rebel and break their Covenant with Him. For awhile, God continues His relationship with them, reasoning with them like a husband might plead with an estranged wife.

People of Israel, listen to what I am saying.
Have I been like a desert to you,
Like a dark and dangerous land?
Why, then, do you say that you will do as you please,
That you will never come back to me?
Does a young woman forget her jewelry,
Or a bride her wedding dress?
But my people have forgotten me for more days than can be counted.
You certainly know how to chase after lovers.
Even the worst of women can learn from you (Jer 2:31-33 GNT).

And now you say to me, "You are my father,
and you have loved me ever since I was a child.
You won't always be angry;
you won't be mad at me forever" (Jer 3:4-5 GNT).

Eventually, because of her insolence, God divorces Israel while still offering hope for the few who are faithful to Him:

"I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce
and sent her away because of all her adulteries"

.....

"Return, faithless people," declares the LORD,
"for I am your husband.

I will choose you—one from a town and two from a clan—
and bring you to Zion" (Jer 3:8-14 NIV).

Finally, even though Israel has broken the marriage covenant, God promises to eventually make a new marriage covenant with her; one which will not be broken:

"Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them" (Jer 31:31-32).

God Calls New Testament Believers to be His Family

In the New Testament, God keeps His promise to the Jews, sending the Messiah who ratifies the New Covenant with His blood. Jesus Christ promises to build a new assembly (“church,” Mt 16:18) by which God is making “a people for His name” under the New Covenant:

I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named (Eph 3:14).

This time, He is including Gentiles alongside the Jews as fellow heirs of His promises:

“I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters,” says the LORD Almighty (2Cor 6:18; cf. Acts 15:14; Eph 2:4-6).

The New Testament records how God sent Jesus Christ to be man’s Savior, so that by dying on a cross He might rescue those who believe in Him from the bondage of sin and from Satan’s dominion and give them a place in God’s family. Furthermore, God also sent Jesus Christ to be a king so that man’s rightful dominion over Earth can be restored. Accordingly, in Christ, believers will regain the rights which Adam lost: “we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:16-17).

The New Testament continues the familiar metaphor of a husband and wife, applying it to Christ and His church. This metaphor reaches a climax with the New Jerusalem “coming down from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev 21:2). At that time, a voice from Heaven will announce that God has accomplished His purposes for humanity, having rescued believers and restored all things:

“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow,

nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.” And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son” (Rev 21:3-7).⁷

The New Testament concludes with God's creation of the New Earth and the establishment of His royal city, the New Jerusalem. God will dwell with His human family forever. In answer to the prayers of God's people, the New Jerusalem will become God's new house, the dwelling place of His family, and the central kingdom of God's domain:

Our Father in heaven
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come;
Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven (Mt 6:9-10).

⁷ Acts 14:22 gives some information related to the idea of “overcoming.” Paul encourages the disciples “to continue in the faith,” explaining that believers must suffer afflictions (tribulation) if they want to enter the kingdom of God (cf. 2Th 1:5; 1Jn 2:14).