

# God's plan and the church

Read Ephesians 1:1–23

## God's plan revealed

<sup>9</sup> making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ  
<sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time,  
to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (Ephesians 1:9–10)  
[to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.] (Ephesians 1:10 NIV)

## God's plan in creation

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.  
And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth  
and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."  
<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.  
<sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them,  
"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens  
and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:26–28)

Ruling

United and diverse

<sup>15</sup> The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.  
<sup>16</sup> And the Lord God commanded the man, saying,  
"You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,  
<sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."  
<sup>18</sup> Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." (Genesis 2:15–18)

## Humanity's failure

<sup>16</sup> To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

<sup>17</sup> And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it',

cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

<sup>18</sup> thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.

<sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread,

till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken;

for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." (Genesis 3:16–19)

## Creation's longing

<sup>19</sup> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (Romans 8:19–21)

## Noah

And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. (Genesis 9:1)

## Abraham

<sup>1</sup> Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:1–3)

## Israel

## Psalms 8

<sup>4</sup> what is man that you are mindful of him,  
and the son of man that you care for him?

<sup>5</sup> Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings  
and crowned him with glory and honour.

<sup>6</sup> You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;  
**you have put all things under his feet,**

<sup>7</sup> all sheep and oxen,  
and also the beasts of the field,

<sup>8</sup> the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,  
whatever passes along the paths of the seas. (Psalm 8:4–8)

## God's plan fulfilled in Christ & the church

### Jesus' perfect obedience

<sup>36</sup> And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."  
(Mark 14:36)

### Ephesians 1:16–23

<sup>16</sup> I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,  
<sup>17</sup> that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,  
may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,  
<sup>18</sup> having the eyes of your hearts enlightened,  
that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you,  
what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,  
<sup>19</sup> and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe,  
according to the working of his great might  
<sup>20</sup> that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,  
<sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion,  
and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.  
<sup>22</sup> **And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,**  
<sup>23</sup> **which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.** (Ephesians 1:16–23)

<sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.  
(Ephesians 2:1–10)

Possible discussion questions...

How would really grasping God's plan impact...

- i) our view the Lord Jesus
- ii) our view of the church in the world?
- iii) our own approach to church?