The Pentateuch

## God’s Plan in Scripture

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**Bible Text:** Genesis 1-3

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As a subset of our annual theme, “God’s Planning to Grow,” last week we launched a new series called “God’s Plan in Scripture.” This summer your pastoral staff desires to take the church family on a 50,000 foot overview of the Bible to gain an understanding of the big picture. Here’s why that’s important, many times we know certain verses from the Bible, even stories, but we don’t know how they fit together. Someone has well said that it’s like pieces from a jigsaw puzzle. We may have an individual piece here or there but we’ve never seen the big picture on the front of the puzzle box. That’s what this study is intended to provide, the big picture, God’s plan in Scripture.

Last week we started the series with some phrases regarding the big picture plan. If you were to say it like a seminarian, here’s how that might look: God’s plan is to manifest the fullness of his glory to his creation by establishing his kingdom upon the earth in which he dwells through Jesus Christ with his people as Jesus Christ is the king for eternity. If you were going to say it in three words: Jesus revealed in Scripture. I suppose, technically, that’s four words but we won’t count the end. If you were to summarize it in one, it would be Jesus that we have just sung about.

By way of resources as well, each component of the Bible, you say, “I want to know a little bit more.” This book “30 Days to Understanding the Bible,” I would encourage you to get. And this is the book we also use in our Faith Community Institute class called “Overview of the Bible.” So, that’s a helpful resource if you’re wanting to study along with this series.

This morning I have the privilege of presenting to you the Pentateuch which is the first five books of the Bible. Your story, your story, God’s people, begins in the Pentateuch. What is the Pentateuch? The Pentateuch is the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. If we were to begin to say which ones of those were the hardest ones to understand, the vote would be certainly for Leviticus. We can hardly even say it, don’t even know what it means, but from the end of Exodus, the latter half of Exodus through Leviticus, those are probably the toughest chapters. I will begin to give you a concept of how to approach those as we go along.

These books are also called the Book of the Law, the Book of Moses, the Law of Moses, because a man named Moses is the author of those books. Moses is the man with whom much of the Pentateuch is preoccupied. After Genesis, the first book, the rest of the Pentateuch is about Moses leading God’s people out of slavery and into a relationship with God. God dwelling with them as they go to a land that God promised. Genesis literally means “the beginning.” It’s the beginning of creation. It’s the beginning of man. It’s the beginning of God’s dealing with man. It’s not the beginning of God. God has no beginning. By definition he is God and has no beginning or end.

I want to mention a few points here before we get too much into it. There are some significant things to remember about the early story of humanity that is contained in Genesis 1-11 which consists of the events from creation, flood, through the Tower of Babel. The earth before that Genesis flood was dramatically different than it is today. Genesis 1 paints the picture of an earth that you would not recognize. There was one land mass, not continents. One ocean, not oceans. A climate that permits the first two humans to run around naked and not ashamed, they didn’t know about Indiana winters. A different geography. At the event in Genesis called the flood, the Scriptures declare that a cataclysmic event happened where the crust of the earth ripped open the fountains of the deep, the Scriptures declare, and something called the floodgates of heaven burst forth. And during that time of judgment, rendered the earth into the way that we see it more today, scarred with valleys, mountains and different continents, evidences of upheaval and disasters. My point here is remember that the earth in those early chapters is not the same as it is today.

Here’s an animation to kind of help you to see what the earth went through as God judged the earth and why it’s a world that perished.

Pretty sobering video there. The fountains of the deep, the scars that came from that may still be visible today, the fault line known as the Mid-Atlantic Ridge that spans the entire circumference of the earth. You can see it there in that picture.

So, the world before the flood was dramatically different. We shouldn’t expect it to be something like we are very familiar with. Also, the people before the flood and the Tower of Babel were also very different from us today. They spoke the same language, imagine that. They lived lives that were significantly longer than we would expect today. I mean, 900 years old, Adam. With that longevity and lifespan, can you imagine how much your intellect could develop? The knowledge you have now, multiply that by hundreds of years. How about the sin that you have now. Multiply that by 900 years. That’s why God had to destroy the world at that moment in time. There was no stopper on sin. With the longevity of life, their sin could really be developed.

My point here is that Genesis 1-11 details a world that perished. Because of our perceptions of that world are skewed today by evolutionary philosophy. Evolutionary philosophy proclaims that mankind today is smarter than he has ever been, more intelligent than he has every been because we are the pinnacle. That’s really not the case. It’s the reverse of that. The Pentateuch, if it shows us anything, shows us that man has degenerated. He has, in one sense, de-evolved, degenerated from an ideal state into a polluted, corrupted state in need of redemption.

So, here, as we approach the first 11 chapters of Genesis, if you begin at the starting point, remember, the available revelation that we have on the world that perished, a long time ago, in that time period, is only contained in 11 chapters. So, we must approach the first 11 chapters of Genesis with great humility in that we don’t know all that we would like to know about that early world. But we know all that we need to know, that God has told us.

The Pentateuch also does this, it answers life’s fundamental questions. The beginnings of anything set the trajectories for our understanding of that thing. A beginning sets the framework for our understanding of any story. If I were to say to you some famous storylines, you would begin to remember how that story unfolds. Such as, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” You know the story? A Tale of Two Cities. “You don’t know about me without you, having read a book by the name of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, but that ain’t no matter anyway.” That is the first line of the Adventures of Huck Finn. “A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away.” You know I couldn’t have not mentioned that one, right? “In the beginning, God created…” That’s the framework for everything.

Those lines set the framework upon which the story unfolds. Without that, the narrative would not be properly understood. Your place in God’s plan, your story, God’s story with you, without the beginning would not be properly understood. That’s why the Pentateuch answers questions like this, Who is God? Who are we? Where did we come from? What is God’s plan with me? Why is there evil? Why does the world seem broken? Why am I broken? Why does the earth look like it does, scarred the way it is? Flood. What does God require of man? Where did the races originate? Why do we have different languages today?

Now, as we begin to unpack the Pentateuch this morning, I could talk to you about the content, the timeline, the creation, fall, flood, Tower of Babel, patriarchs. I’d encourage you, if you want the timeline, to get Max Anders’ book “30 Days to Understand the Bible.” Today, I’m going to try to help you to understand how you need to understand the significance of those events in Genesis.

Here’s how we’re going to organize our time. What does the Pentateuch, not just Genesis, say about God, man and God’s plan with man? And then we’re going to go to, how does it all point to Jesus Christ?

Let’s start with this: what does the Pentateuch consistently teach about God? From the beginning, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Please notice that it’s not in the beginning man was there. The Pentateuch from the outset teaches that there’s only one God and you are not him. I am not him, as well. Not gods, or the high gods, lesser gods. He is the God, one and only and he created everything that we see in our society.

The concept of one God is not a revolutionary thought to us. Modern Western Civilization grew up on the concept of monotheism, one God, not polytheism, many gods. But across the horizon of human history, and outside of Western Civilization, mankind has struggled with the concept of one God. Ask your international student friends. The Pentateuch regularly asserts that there is only one God and his name, as it is first revealed in the Pentateuch, declares that as well. In the Exodus events, in Exodus 6-8 God says to Moses, “I am going to take you for my people and I will be your God and you shall know…” He’s trying to demonstrate to the entire watching world, “that I am Yahweh.” That means, I am the one who really is, in contrast to all the other Egyptian so-called gods, the one who really is. That’s where the term also, the holiness, begins to come from as well.

The one true holy God. As Moses watched the one true God wipe out the Egyptian army who believed in multiple false gods, God showed that he alone was the one who truly existed and that he had commanded the forces of the earth to wipe out the Egyptian army. And as the corpses of the Egyptian army were washing up onto the shore of the Red Sea, Moses penned these words, “Who is like you, God, among the so-called gods. Majestic in holiness.” Right there, holiness is defined. God is the one like whom there is none other. He is unique. He is unique.

While we here in modern Western Civilization may not struggle with the concept of multiple gods in theory, we sure do struggle with the concept of a unique God who is unlike anything else. Think with me for just a moment, if there is only one of something, what do we do with it? We cherish it, we value it, we exalt it as one of a kind. The price goes up and we sell that one of a kind on ebay for lots of money. We has lost our concept of a God who is the one and only. And we lose that concept when we think that God is like something. God is like Santa Claus or God is like a president or God is like chocolate, or God is like something else. God who created all of this around us is like none of it. God who created all of this is like none of it and the Pentateuch teaches us that he is the one true holy God.

Also this, that he is the sovereign Creator. You say, “Brent, that is not news to me, I know.” But, let’s talk about the significance of this for just a moment. The fact that he is Creator cannot be dismissed, my evolutionist friends, for evolutionists here. And we begin to talk about, O let’s talk about Jesus, the Redeemer, those two concepts are intertwined. Let me begin to show you how.

In Genesis 1:2, God created the earth formless, empty, darkness was over the face of the deep waters and the Spirit of God was hovering over those waters. God created, first, a formless, empty, dark, watery blob, mess. In the beginning God created a mess. But then because God is a creator, he spoke light into that mess, into the darkness. He spoke by his Word, form into the formlessness. He spoke fullness into the emptiness. God made the earth out of nothing then brought it into a mess and then made a beautiful creation out of it by his Word. Him being the Creator means that he can bring light into darkness, he can speak fullness into emptiness.

Here’s why that’s all so important for us, he is a sovereign re-creator. I use that term recreation because that simply means redemption. What is redemption, my friends? It is the giving of new life. It is the giving of new life. God cannot give new life if he has not the Creator of all life in the first place. So, in the Pentateuch we see that God starts over a couple of times. In the beginning he created mankind and all of this and then mankind fell. Mankind proceeded to get so corrupt in their longevity of life that God sent a cataclysmic flood that we saw that shook the foundations of the earth, altering it forever and destroying life upon its surface with the exception of Him, God, saving one family and animals in an ark. A boat of salvation to bring forth a new creation, new life on a newly cleansed earth.

God brought Noah and his family through the flood and planted them on a changed earth so that he would bring new creation there. However, Noah and his family who were made of the same stock of Adam, soon rebelled against God as well and God brought judgment once again on them at the Tower of Babel. By which he divided up the people groups into the nations of the earth who were rebelling against God. But in the very next scene, Genesis 12, we see establishing a new plan, new life, recreation, redemption to bless those rebellious nations that he had just divided through one man, Abraham. A new creation.

So, here’s what the Pentateuch establishes about God. He is both Creator and Redeemer. You cannot have one without the other, my dear evolutionary friends if there’s any here. The Pentateuch establishes God as Creator and Redeemer and the rest of the Scripture will speak to those two twin themes together. Whenever you see something about redemption, not far in the Bible chapters before or after that, you will also see terminology of Creator. The one who can bring new life brought original life in the beginning. That’s why you have hope. We’re dead in our sins and our trespasses and God, being the Creator God, is also a Redeemer God who can give you new life.

That’s what the Pentateuch says about God but what does it say about humans? What does the Pentateuch ultimately say about humans? What about their history? Your storyline, you have a history. Here is the history: you are created by God and you are not evolved. That’s what the Pentateuch teaches.

Secondly, what is your nature? What is your nature? One of the great questions is, What is man? You are made out of the dust of the earth but you are animated by the very, very, very breath of God himself. God breathed into the dust the breath of life. This is significant, faith friends. We’re made out of dust but animated by the breath of God. Why is that significant? Well, yes, you have a physical component to you. You have biology, you have the skin made up of dust, chemicals going on through here but if that’s all you were, biology and chemicals, then the only thing that we would need to sustain us and solve our problems today would be more chemicals, more medicine, more food which is basically just a compellation of chemicals as well.

But you are more than that. You are more than biology and chemistry. You have a soul, the breath of God is animating your life and, therefore, your soul is not fed by chemicals. It is fed by the very Word of God that comes out of his mouth. “Man shall not live by bread alone but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” That is your nature.

What is your identity or your purpose? History, nature, what is your identity or your purpose? Faith friends, we always act out of our perceived identity. Let me say that again, we always act out of our perceived identity. We always, always, always do. Say “always.” Often our identity is found in our prestigious positions that we climb the ladder towards. Often our identity is found in our popularity among the crowd. Often our identity is found in our possessions that we accumulate. Often our identity is found in our past, good or bad. Often our identity is found in our progeny, those that we birth. Who does God say we are? If you get a grip of this, and believe this, then we should act out of this in a different way. Our identity or purpose should be the image bearer of God. His likeness and his representative.

Genesis 1:26, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.’” Now, when Moses penned those words, image and likeness, the people understood very clearly what he meant. Sometimes we lose the context of the culture because of our distance from that time period, but when Moses wrote image and likeness his people understood exactly what he meant by that and what your purpose or identity is. In Moses’ time, image and likeness referred to a statue literally that represented a great king. The great king that had conquered the land of the ancient Near East. When the king would go back home and enjoy the spoils of war, he would leave a statue there to represent himself. So, when people looked at the statue, they were to see the great king.

When Moses pens those words, mankind was made in the image and the likeness of God, it’s shouting out, “There is only one great King,” you’re not him. You are the representative of the great King. You are the visible representation of the invisible God. God’s original plan when people looked at his people, they were to be looking at the image of God.

After the fall of mankind where man essentially wanted to make a name for himself instead of representing God, God began to make a distinction among people groups. Mankind would be forever divided into two races, not several. Not the Caucasians, not the Asians, not the Africans, not the Eskimos, but two races. So what is the classification of mankind today as we’re learning about our origins, here? Mankind is ultimately divided into only two categories, not multiple races. There are not multiple races, there are only two. After the fall, the two races are this, the two races are God’s chosen seed, the lineage of his people, the seed of God and the second race is the unbelievers, the seed of the serpent.

And you may say, “Brent, but how do I know the distinction between those two? The seed of God and the seed of the serpent? How do I know?” Ultimately the story of Abraham is given to reveal to us all of the distinguishing characteristics of God’s children, his seed. Those who will partake in the redeemed, visible representation of the invisible God. What is that distinguishing characteristic of the children of God? The Abraham story tells us very clearly this: those who possess Abrahamic type faith. What is that? The Abrahamic type faith is the faith that Abraham manifested in the one true Creator and Redeemer God.

Do you remember the story about Abraham? God came to him and said, “Abraham, you and your wife are going to have a baby.” Sarah had a dead womb. Abraham trusted in all kinds of previous pagan gods, none real gods. The one true God came to Abraham and said, “Abraham, the dead womb in your wife will have a baby some day.” Abraham had to come to believe in the one true Creator God and the one who could impart new life to his wife’s dead womb. A faith that believed the one true Creator and Redeemer God.

We’ve talked about what does the Pentateuch say about God, what does the Pentateuch say about man, what is he doing with us? What is his plan with man? What is God’s plan with man is the final part of our understanding of what the Pentateuch possesses here. And folks, I don’t understand why this is God’s plan but here it is, here is what he teaches: the one true incomparable, holy, Creator and Redeemer God who created you desires to dwell intimately with you. The Bible doesn’t tell us why that’s the case and it’s an amazing thing but he does not tell us why. He says, “This is what I want.”

And the opening scene in the Scripture paints a beautiful picture of what God wants with his people as God establishes a paradise where we dwell with him, where Adam and Eve, his first children, dwelt with where God was. His children would dwell with him intimately. His children would dwell with him in the Garden of Eden innocently. There was no stain of sin, there was no pollution of death. God talked and walked with his children Adam and Eve. And there was abundant life there in that paradise garden. But, however, that sweet relationship with God in paradise in Genesis 3 ultimately was destroyed. The dwelling place and the presence of God was lost because man disobeyed God. Instead of innocence, instead of man dwelling in a child-like innocence with his Creator, there was guilt because of man’s sin. Instead of an intimacy with God where God was walking and talking with his people, there was alienation from him. God cast Adam and Eve out of the paradise sanctuary where he dwelt. Instead of life, there was death.

However, because God’s plan, he still wanted to dwell with his people, he set in motion a plan of redemption, new life, new creation to continue to dwell with his people and here’s where the hard parts of the Pentateuch really start. This whole part in the latter half of Exodus into Leviticus is about the Temple and all of these laws. They all begin to prescribe how God will dwell, re-establish his dwelling place with his people. If you read all of those laws, all of those prescriptions, what’s going on there? God is re-establishing his presence with his people in Exodus 19 through really the Book of Numbers, including that hard book of Leviticus.

Here’s an amazing thing, latch onto this for just a second: the holy home of the Tabernacle that we kind of skip over many times, that we don’t like to read all of those laws and sacrifices, the holy home of the Tabernacle presence of God was like the Garden of Eden in several ways. Let me give you a few. The Garden of Eden where God dwelt, the Garden of Eden where God dwelt was guarded on the outside with cherubim. The Tabernacle that Moses built with his people, where a small portion of God’s glory dwelt, had curtains surrounding it also embroidered with cherubim. The Garden of Eden where God originally dwelt with his creation, had a Tree of Life in the middle of it. In the Tabernacle, where only a small portion of God’s glory dwelt, had a lampstand in the middle of it symbolizing light and life. The Garden of Eden where God dwelt was a land with precious jewels and metals of gold and silver. The Tabernacle where only a small portion of God’s glory dwelt was built with precious jewels and metals of gold and silver. It was meant to be a re-creation of the Garden of Eden in one sense.

But here is where it differs. There is one major difference, however, between the holy home of God in the Tabernacle and in the Garden of Eden. God’s home in the Tabernacle after the fall had to be continually cleansed because God’s home was among sin-stained, polluted men and women. But God ended up giving a picture of what was necessary to cleanse his holy home from sin. What was the solvent that God used to cleanse his holy home? Mr. Clean? Ajax? Hang onto that thought for just a second. What did it take to cleanse God’s holy home so sinful people like you and me could dwell with the presence of God? We’ll talk about that in just a little bit.

So, not only was his goal to dwell with his people but as his visible representatives, he wanted his people to spread his name and fame throughout all the glory of creation, to have his people established on the earth spreading his true rule, his glory over all creation. The Pentateuch ultimately ends with the people of God on the verge of inheriting a permanent home, the Promised Land where God will dwell in their midst and they were to be a righteous nation reflecting God’s glory to the rest of the world around them. That’s how Deuteronomy ends. His people were to reflect the glory of God to all the nations as God was dwelling in their midst.

But, can I ask you a question also, Why did he pick that particular piece of land? God picked that particular land and at the end of Deuteronomy, his people have marched to that particular land and he wants to dwell with them there in the land of Canaan, or the land of Israel. Why didn’t he pick Hawaii? Tell me that, wouldn’t that have been a lot funner? More beautiful? Here’s why he did that: if your identity is the visible representation of the invisible God, God wants you to be in the most populous place. That is a land bridge, that is the crossroads of the world at that moment in time. If you wanted to go from Egypt to Iraq or Iran, Babel, you had to go through Israel. If you want to go from modern day Turkey to Egypt, you had to go through Israel. He placed Abraham and his descendants, his people that he wanted to dwell in the midst of, at the center of the crossroads of the world so that they could proclaim his glory. Folks, that’s not so much more different than you and I. We’ll talk about that as we get to the rest of the plan of God.

Let me say one more thing: one of the hardest things about the Pentateuch is the Old Testament law. Here is phrase you need to remember: patent leather shoes, ok? This is not in your notes. Write this down: go to our website, the Faith Church website and type in “patent leather shoes.” Ok, you’re laughing, I can hear you laughing. If you type in “patent leather shoes” you will get a blog post by me that explains the Old Testament law. We’re not going to go into it today, but that’ll help you understand and get your mind around the Old Testament law.

If it’s all about Jesus, we need to talk about Jesus now. How does the Pentateuch ultimately point to Jesus Christ? Here’s what the Pentateuch establishes: the need for a perfect second Adam to fulfill God’s created purpose for mankind. The Pentateuch shows that humans willfully rejected their Creator and their God-given purpose generation after generation after generation. Nobody in the Pentateuch fulfilled their God-given purpose without stain and corruption of sin. There was no perfect visible representation of the invisible God to rule over the kingdom of God, to bring light to the created world. Thus, the Pentateuch leaves us wondering if the person of Moses wasn’t able to perfectly fulfill God’s plan, who could ever be? There is a vacancy in regard to the role of the perfect man in the Pentateuch. And there will be throughout the entire Old Testament until it climaxes in Christ.

The Pentateuch also points to Christ in this way: the need for a way for mankind to dwell with God once again. Remember these words from Genesis 3:24, God “drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way,” the way to what? The way to dwelling with God in a paradise sanctuary. But even where God tried God re-established his Tabernacle presence on the earth, man still rebelled. Look at this, Exodus 32:8, “They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them.” As he was trying to re-establish his presence with them.

Folks, mankind needs a way back to God. Mankind needs a way to dwell in the presence of God. What does it take for God to dwell with man in his holy home? What solvent cleanses God’s holy home in the presence of sinful man? And that’s where the Old Testament concept of blood came in. The shed lifeblood of the guilty individual was to cleanse God’s holy home. Not Ajax, not Mr. Clean, not anything like that but the blood of the man who was guilty was to cleanse God’s holy home. But you say, “If I’m dead, how can I live with God?” Exactly. And that’s where God instituted a substitute. The Old Testament sacrifices of the animals instead of the blood of the sinner. But those animal sacrifices were just shadows, shadows of one perfect substitute that would offer his blood, his perfect life, in place of his sinful soul.

Hebrews 9:11-14, “But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves,” the substitute for our sin, the blood that would cleanse God’s holy home and would cover our sins, “but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works?”

Jesus Christ said “he is the way, the truth and the life.” He is the way that was forbidden by man to enter in the Garden of Eden. He is the one. He is the way.

Folks, the beginning of the story sets the framework for all of our understanding. If we want to understand Jesus more, start here in the Pentateuch. If we want to understand God more, start here in the Pentateuch. If we want to understand ourselves more, start here in the Pentateuch. God’s story with me begins right here on the path toward pointing us to Jesus and our need for a Savior.

Let’s pray.