



SECTION ONE:
Chapter One
Got Purpose? The Life of Solomon in Perspective

*Behold, a son shall be born to you, who shall be a man of rest;
and I will give him rest from all his enemies all around.*

*His name shall be Solomon, for I will give peace
and quietness to Israel in his days (1 Chronicles 22:9)*

Designed with a Purpose



Does God have a plan and purpose for your life? Few people seem to experience it. Several years ago, this letter appeared in the Ann Lander's column of the newspaper:

*Dear Ann Landers, I don't care what you do with this letter. You can tear it up and throw it in the wastebasket, but I had to write it. You see I'm a guy who wishes he didn't have to get up every morning and face the day. I'm 17, empty, useless, bored, and tired of struggling. I think I'm in everybody's way. I don't think anyone would care if I disappeared from the face of the earth. I know you can't do anything about it, but I wanted to write and let you know what happens in somebody's mind before he pulls the trigger or swallows a bottle of pills.
Signed, A Non-Person.*

Unfortunately, this 17-year-old is not alone. Teenage suicide has reached epidemic proportions in our country.⁷ One reason that is most-often cited is a general lack of purpose and meaning in life. Does God have anything to say about this?

Consider the housewife who has three preschoolers running around the house. The bills are piling up, her body is showing signs of age, and the romance has long gone out of her marriage. She wakes up tired and drained every day and wonders, “*Will it ever end? Will it ever get any better?*” She reflects about the meaning of life and wonders, “*Why am I here? Do I have a purpose?*”

What about the man who has recently retired? His youthful dreams of changing the world have long since faded. He looks back with regrets over lost opportunities, and though he has achieved a great deal of professional success and financial reward, he wonders if his life has been misspent. Does God still have a purpose for Him?

Let’s think for a moment about God’s words in Psalm 139. By divine inspiration, David takes us deep into a mother’s womb to see God’s activity in the life of this developing child. He writes in verses 13-16,

For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.

What an amazing passage of Scripture! Our Creator God has infused His divine and personal touch into our lives from the very beginning, when we were yet in our mother’s womb. Notice the language he uses: *I was made in secret ... I was skillfully wrought ... Your eyes saw my unformed substance ... all my days were written and fashioned.*

Think about that! God knew you before you were born. He shaped you. He designed you. You are not some cosmic accident. You didn’t happen by mistake – He uniquely created you. It has been said that there are no illegitimate children. There may be illegitimate parents, but no illegitimate children, because God has uniquely designed them.

Designed to Live and Minister Together in Community

Just as God created our physical bodies with purpose, He has also created the Body of Christ (the Church) with purpose. The entire twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians speaks about the unique makeup of the body of Christ. Notice these few verses from 12:12-20.

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—

⁷ According to the National Institute for Mental Health, suicide is the third leading cause of death among teens in the United States.

whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many.

If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.”⁸

Psalm 139 taught us that God was active in shaping us at our physical birth. And now we see in 1 Corinthians 12 that God has actively shaped us at our spiritual birth:

- God designed the blueprint of our spiritual makeup and gifting.
- God has an eternal purpose for each one who is in Christ.
- God has made the Body of Christ “one” yet it has “many members.”
- God has made every member of the Body of Christ related to the Head, Jesus Christ.
- In Christ we are also related to one another.
- God has given to each member of the Body of Christ different spiritual gifts to build up the Body of Christ.

Let’s Meet Solomon

Have you ever heard of King Solomon? It’s likely you’ve heard of his father, King David, the man who shaped Israel’s kingdom and lived his life as a man after God’s own heart. Solomon was the second son of David and Bathsheba, and became the third king of Israel. He was probably born about BC 1035 and succeeded his father on the throne in early manhood, probably about sixteen or eighteen years of age. His history is recorded in 1 Kings 1-11 and 2 Chronicles 1-9.

During his long reign of forty years, the Hebrew monarchy grew in splendor and prosperity. However, the first half of Solomon’s reign was by far the brighter and more prosperous; the latter half was clouded by the idolatries into which he fell, mainly from his heathen intermarriages.⁹

It was reserved for Solomon to build the temple of God. Known as the wisest man who ever lived, Solomon was blessed with wisdom and riches from God.¹⁰ He wrote many of the *Proverbs*, the book of *Ecclesiastes*, and the *Song of Solomon*.

Prior to his birth, God revealed His purposes to King David: *Behold, a son shall be born to you, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies all around. His name*

⁸ I would encourage you to take the time to read this chapter in its entirety. As you do, please notice the contrasts between “one body” and “many members.” The unity of the Body and the unique contribution of all of its members are equally important to the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁹ 1 Kings 11:1-8; Easton’s Bible Dictionary.

¹⁰ 1 Kings 3:10-28

shall be Solomon, for I will give peace and quietness to Israel in his days (1 Chronicles 22:9). Solomon is one of the few Bible characters that God named and stated the purpose of their lives before they were born. As we look at the life of Solomon, we will discover principles that will tell us how God has a plan and purpose for our lives as well.

The Season of Rest

Solomon had three distinct seasons in his life. He received God's purpose and entered into the faith rest of God's work. During this first season his focus was on building God's kingdom, not his own. As he walked in faith and obedience, he reflected his small part in the overall plan and purpose of God to reveal Jesus in the Old Testament. God loved Solomon – and Solomon loved God.

The Season of Rebellion

After faithfully completing the Temple of God, Solomon turned to build his own kingdom with many great works initiated by his own flesh. Solomon began well, but failed in his assignment to reflect Christ in his relationship with God. This season of his life could be summed up with the statement, *“But Solomon loved many strange (foreign) women.”*¹¹ This was the beginning of his spiritual compromise and downfall.

Solomon's words from Ecclesiastes describe his life during this season: *“Vanity of vanities, all is vanity”* (1:1). Solomon did not walk in the faith-rest life that God intended for him. His life was dominated by the faith – and not faith – and the result was a life of futility and frustration.

The Season of Return

In the third season of his life, we see Solomon responding to the Lord's chastening. Most of his great works and wealth that he gathered would be lost. Ecclesiastes keeps repeating the phrase *“vanity of vanities, all is vanity,”* describing his lack of purpose and fruitfulness.

It must be noted that Solomon probably thought he was living a life of purpose as Israel's great king. But his life of purpose was far from God's greater purpose in Christ. However, the book of Proverbs reflects the wisdom gained by living according to God's wisdom and purpose. And the Song of Solomon reflects the love that God intends between one man and one woman. It also hints at the love of God for His bride, the Church.

This season of his life could be summed up with the word of the Lord in 2 Samuel 7:14-15, *I will be his father, and he shall be my son: if he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men; but my lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee.* Solomon's rebellion mirrored the future state of Israel in which they departed from their promised faith-rest in God and rebelled against God by turning to idols. But God was merciful and faithful to Solomon – just as He is to us today. He waits for us to turn to Him in repentance, faith, trust and obedience.

¹¹ 1 Kings 11:1, King James Version. Explanation mine.

Marked for Life's Journey



I began this chapter by talking about people who have no sense of purpose. Many times God uses a cataclysmic event to get our attention. Mine happened on a rainy day when I was nine years old. My friend and I were walking down a sidewalk next to a major road. As we came to the intersection of a four-lane road, I stopped. My friend darted safely across the road and began to taunt me, “*C’mon, chicken, run!*” Growing tired of his teasing, I saw an opening and ran.

I had failed to see a car turning off the main road. I panicked and tried to stop, but it was too late. My feet slipped, and my momentum lifted me in the air and I fell flat on my back. My head turned to watch the car brake and begin to slide toward me. I remember watching as if in slow motion the car hydroplaned and slid in my direction. In that instant I was facing death. The car stopped within inches of my head. My frozen body was lying under the front bumper with the right front tire at my nose. God saved me ... for a reason.

I was marked that day – not by a tire tread, but by God. My friend was laughing loudly. He thought it was one of the funniest things he had ever seen. But I was hearing from God. Silently, a thought came instantly to my mind: “*Truman, God has a plan for your life.*” Many years later I began to discover that God indeed had a purpose for my life even before I was born. I discovered that God had a greater purpose in Christ for my life.

Do you know that God also marks your life? He has a plan and purpose to work *in* you and *through* you to accomplish His greater purpose in Christ. Are you ready to go deeper in this study to discover what that purpose is?

Questions to Reflect On

In this chapter we’ve seen five great truths:

- God had a purpose for our lives before we were born.
- God’s purpose is found in Christ and not in ourselves.
- God’s purpose is related to and linked to other believers before and after us.
- God’s purpose will lead to God’s peace and rest in our lives.
- Living for our own purposes will lead to a life of vanity and futility.

1. Which of those statements stands out to you the most? Why?
2. Have you ever had a cataclysmic event where you sensed God’s intervention and protection in your life? How has that affected you?

3. How much of God's purpose for your life do you currently understand and experience?

Prayer

My Father, I praise You for being patient with me. The more I walk with You, the more You challenge and change the way I think about everything. You have begun a good work in me. I pray that You would continue to accomplish that work until the day Jesus comes for me.¹² You have known me from the very beginning, from the days in my mother's womb. I praise You for the way You have knit me together – with my strengths, weaknesses, gifts, needs and abilities. You have made me dependent upon You. You have built me for a relationship with You, and my heart longs for You.¹³ I long for You and affirm that your lovingkindness is better than life. Because of that, my lips will praise You and I will bless You as long as I live. May I be satisfied with nothing less than knowing You completely.¹⁴ In Jesus' matchless name, Amen.

¹² Philippians 1:6

¹³ Psalm 63:1

¹⁴ Psalm 63:3-5



Chapter Two The Purpose and Christ



Solomon Was Chosen for God's Purpose

Some couples know exactly what they are going to name their baby from the moment they find out they are expecting. For others, it's not so easy. I recently heard of a couple that had not decided on a name for their six-month-old child. That's being indecisive!

When it comes to God's purpose, He is *anything* but indecisive. Since eternity past, He has known what He purposes to do. His purpose does not change – because He does not change.

Receiving, Not Achieving, the Purpose of God for Our Lives

In 1 Chronicles 22:9, God names David's son before he was born. The name *Solomon* means *peace*. Through Solomon, Israel experienced God's peace in the land. Solomon did not have to obtain peace through the efforts of war. He simply enjoyed the fruit of his father David's labor. David was a man of war – but Solomon, his son, was to be a man of peace.

1 Chronicles 28:5-6 states, *And of all my sons (for the LORD has given me many sons) He has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel. Now He said to me, 'It is your son Solomon who shall build My house and My courts; for I have chosen him to be My son, and I will be his Father.* From these verses, we see that God chose Solomon for three specific tasks:

- He was to sit on the throne of David as King over Israel. This was his specific *mission*.
- He was to build the Temple of God. This involved his *worship*.
- He was to be in a Father-Son relationship with God. This provided his *identity*.

Before his birth, God ordained specific works for Solomon to accomplish. In a similar way, *we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them* (Ephesians 2:10).

However, there was a spiritual battle going on – and Solomon often fell into Satan's traps. *But as long as Solomon walked in the presence and purpose of God, he had abounding grace that kept his fleshly sin-nature in check.* Doing the will of God supplies us with the strength to better deal with our sin nature.

That is an important principle – and one that parallels our relationship with Jesus Christ. We too are able to enter the victory that Jesus has won for us. He defeated sin, Satan and self on the cross once and for all. We do not fight for our salvation, nor do we labor in our own works to merit it. It has been accomplished for us. We receive God's gift of salvation, not by achieving it through works of the flesh, but by grace through faith. In a similar way, we walk with God daily, not by attempting to do great things for God, but by allowing Him to work in and through our lives in great ways. As we do that, we will begin to understand our *identity* as children of God; we will more sincerely *worship* Him as our great God in heaven; and we will progressively understand the *mission* to which He has called us.

Identifying, Not Inventing, the Purpose of God for Our Lives

Each of us has a choice: to live life with purpose, or to live life without purpose. Solomon's life illustrates the blessing of living to fulfill God's purpose and build God's kingdom. It also illustrates the consequences of selfishly living for our own purposes and building our own kingdoms.

Solomon knew God's purpose for his life because it was revealed to him. In 1 Kings 5:4-5, *But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor evil occurrence. and behold, I propose to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spoke to my father David, saying, "Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he shall build the house for My name."* Notice Solomon said, *"I purpose to build a house..."* Solomon purposed according to the purpose God already planned. Before it ever entered Solomon's heart, God established this as His purpose for Solomon.

Notice this great principle on living with purpose. *We purpose according to that which God has already planned for our life.* This is where we find rest and fulfillment. Living our lives for our own plans and purposes leads to frustration, futility and foolishness. Jesus referred to this type of person who *"built his house on the sand and not the firm foundational rock"* (Matthew 7:24-27). God's greater purpose for Solomon's life was not only to build the Temple and sit on the throne of David, but also to write *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes* and *The Song of Solomon*. *As long as Solomon lived for God's purpose, he was blessed, found rest, and experienced fruitfulness.* For several years he experienced rest as he gave himself to building the Temple. But then his heart changed.

He began to build his own kingdom and follow after the lusts of his heart. Even though it appeared to be very successful, his heart turned from God, and all his great works were in vain. He began to live his life like most people: for their own selfish purpose.

Clarifying, Not Compromising, the Purpose of God for Our Lives

Ecclesiastes becomes a testimony of the emptiness of life when we try to live without a love-relationship with God. It is *vanity*: empty, fruitless, and futile. *Vanity of vanities* became the repeated chorus of Solomon's life because he compromised his calling from God. When he followed his fleshly lusts and married foreign women,¹⁵ his heart was turned away from God. Later in the Old Testament, Nehemiah uses Solomon as an illustration that, even though we are children of God who are loved by Him, we cannot ignore the Word of God without suffering the consequences of our actions.¹⁶

Many Christians have had the same experience as Solomon. They are trying to find peace and success by building their own kingdom. But it will never come. Rather, we will experience God's chastisement until we repent and return to Him. Hebrews 12:5-11 describes this chastisement from God:

And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

God loves you too much to allow you to live in sin and disobedience. As a good Father, He will discipline you – not to harm you, but to help you come back to Him in faith and repentance. For the believer, there is no real rest and peace until our lives are lined up with God's greater purpose in Christ.

Defining, not Diluting, God's Greater Purpose in Christ

I use the phrase *God's greater purpose in Christ* to describe all that God is doing both in heaven and earth as it is related to His purpose in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:9-10 states,

*Having made known to us **the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself**, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather*

¹⁵ Solomon became famous for having 700 wives and 300 concubines.

¹⁶ Nehemiah 13:25-27

together in one **all things in Christ**, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him (emphasis mine).

Paul writes later in the same letter, *To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord* (3:10, emphasis mine).

What is God's greater purpose in Christ?

- God's purpose for our individual lives is encompassed and woven into God's greater purpose in Christ. God has no purpose for our lives outside of Christ (Eph. 1:9-12).
- God's purpose for our lives is not just related to our brief lifespan, but is part of His eternal and greater purpose in Christ (Eph. 3:10).
- God's purpose for our lives is related to our calling and salvation in grace in Christ (2 Tim. 1:9).
- God's purpose for our lives is not according to *our* works or plans, but according to God's elective purposes (Romans 9:11).
- God is at work for good to all who love God and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).
- God's purpose for our lives is not independent but is linked and interwoven with all other believers in Christ – past, present and future (Eph. 1:9-12; Rom. 8:28).

Personal Application

I recently heard about a newspaper article describing two elderly ladies in West Virginia. An adult bookstore moved into their community. The two elderly ladies took offense at that, so they went to the proprietor and asked him very kindly if he would consider moving his bookstore to another county. The response, they said in the article, was *"not favorable."* So they decided to go to the mayor and present their case. The mayor said he certainly empathized with them, but there was simply nothing he could do. So, bless the hearts of these two elderly ladies, they took the situation into their own hands. Each of them grabbed a camera and stood outside of the bookstore and during the opening hours of the store, took pictures of everyone who came out. Can you imagine what that might look like? *"Oh, Mr. Johnson, (snap, snap) ... you might want some wallets of that one!"* Well, the fact of the matter is, after three months the bookstore was closed down and the owner agreed to move to a different county. The thing I loved about the article is that at the end, one of the ladies mentioned, almost as an aside, *"You know, we didn't even have film in the camera!"*

Isn't there something very refreshing about individuals who are so burdened by an issue of their times that they take action? What are you so burdened about that you will take action? How is God moving in your heart to reveal His greater purpose in Christ for you?

- God's purpose for me is found only in Jesus Christ. I cannot look to my culture, my profession, my possessions, my relationships or my activities to find His greater purpose for my life. It is found only in Jesus.
- God's purpose is to reveal one person to the world – Jesus, not me.

- God has a greater purpose in Christ for me than I could ever discover for myself through my own desires and planning.
- God’s greater purpose is related to and linked to all those who live for His greater purpose in Christ.
- If I live selfishly, sinfully and independent from Him, I will miss His greater purpose in Christ. It is only as I abide in Him and depend on Christ moment by moment that I will progressively understand His greater purpose.
- God’s greater purpose in Christ is discovered in a love relationship with Jesus. I must seek Him above all else. He is the pearl of great price to be treasured. When I value the things of eternity, my purpose in life will become progressively clearer.

Questions to Reflect On

1. Do you believe that God has a purpose outlined for you before you were born? If not, what is keeping you from believing that?
2. In what ways have you experienced the discipline and correction of the Lord in your life? How has that discipline kept you “on course” in following Him?
3. What are the things that tempt you away from following God’s greater purpose? Be as specific as possible. Identifying the threats and temptations will help you be aware of the schemes of the devil to get you off course with God’s greater purpose.

Prayer

O Lord, the temptations in my life are many. You have given me both positive and negative examples in Scripture. The positive ones encourage me that a life of faith and obedience is possible; the negative ones cause me to beware that I do not fall into similar traps. ¹⁷Father, I know how weak I am in my flesh. But I also know Your promise: that no temptation has overtaken me but such as is common to man. I know You are faithful; You will not allow me to be tempted beyond what I am able, but with every temptation, You will provide the way of escape so that I will be able to endure it. ¹⁸By Your grace, may I stand and walk. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 10:1-12

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 10:13



Chapter Three The Pattern and Christ - 1

Introduction

When he was growing up, my oldest son Matthew loved to work with me on building projects at home. He quickly learned how to use all the tools, and even as a young child seemed to have a special skill in building things. When I built something, like a fence, I just kind of “winged it,” planning as I went, and often having to go back to the store for more supplies. Often I wound up undoing some of my first attempts because of poor planning.

In contrast, my son was wired differently. He learned from my mistakes. He had a natural gift for drawing and, after taking a drafting class, he would sit down to plan and draw out all of his building projects. Now with a family of his own, he has worked on countless projects, even building some of his own furniture. But with every building project, he has a set of plans that tell him all the material and measurements listed. When he goes to the store, he knows exactly what he needs to complete the project. All he has to do is follow the pattern that he planned out beforehand.

God does not act by chance – but by design. As we will now see with Solomon, God drew out the pattern for the Temple. He communicated exactly what needed to be done. All Solomon had to do was follow the pattern.

His Plan – Or Mine?



Building the Temple was not Solomon’s idea. It was God’s idea. And He took the initiative to describe the blueprints down to the most specific, minute detail for Solomon to follow. God always lays the foundation for what He is doing in Christ, and our part is to build on it faithfully. Most of us come up with a plan for our life and then ask

God to build on it and bless it. This is the incorrect order – and will always lead to futility, as Solomon would experience when he stopped following God and went after the lusts of his heart. *The secret of purpose and peace is not to direct or plan our own lives, but to discover the greater purpose of God for our lives that our Heavenly Father has already set as His specific pattern in Christ.*

His Image Reflected in Me

As a young man I was a coin collector. I learned that each coin had to go through a process of minting to become legal money of value. In doing research on the minting process from the U.S Mint website, I learned some very fascinating facts.

- Each coin starts out as a faceless blank of metal. The first step in modeling a coin is a drawing. It determines the coin's final design.
- A master hub of steel is used to create a "master die."
- The master die will be the basis for reproducing the exact image onto the metal blanks.
- The blanks are selected from metals like gold, silver and copper.
- The blanks are softened by being placed in a furnace and heated to high temperatures.
- The prepared blanks (*planchets*) are now washed in chemicals and are prepared to have the master design and image stamped onto them through extreme pressure from the master die.
- To strike the metal with great force, one die (known as the *anvil*) is held motionless and the other die (known as the *hammer*) strikes the planchet's surface. The anvil is usually a reverse (or *tails*) die, and the hammer is the obverse (or *heads*).
- Once the blank has been prepared and struck, it reflects the image of the prepared die that left its mark on the blank.
- Some special coins, called "*proofs*," have a few added steps of preparation that make the coins reflect the image with even greater clarity. They are often struck twice to leave a clearer image on their surface.

You and I are like those coin blanks. Until we go through the amazing-grace process of being prepared and stamped with the image of Christ in our lives, we have no eternal value to God's kingdom. God has a pattern and image that He is stamping into our lives. If we were asked, "*Whose image is being formed in you?*" we should be able to say, "*It is the image of Jesus.*" Though the process is sometimes painful, we must not complain when God's final purpose is for us to bear the image of Jesus.

The Pattern for the Temple Came from God



Building the Temple was not Solomon's idea. It was David's. But because David was a man of war, it fell to Solomon to be the builder of the Temple. Solomon was not to come up with a new design or his own "*Master Die*" of what the Temple should look like. He was to allow the prearranged design and image of Christ to be stamped upon both his life and the architecture of the Temple.

Once Solomon discovered from Scripture God's purpose in building the Temple, he entered into a "work of rest." Rest is not inactivity, *It is the "abiding in and enabling of God's Spirit" to do His greater purposes through us.* As Solomon entered this rest by the surrendering of his will to the will of God, he experienced an intimate fellowship with God and the enabling grace of God to do His will.

Not only did God give Solomon His *purpose* beforehand, but He also gave him the *pattern* or blueprints of the Temple:

*Then David gave to Solomon his son the **pattern** of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, and the **pattern** of all that he had by the spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things.*

*All this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of this **pattern**. And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord (1 Chronicles 28:11-12, 19-20, KJV, emphasis mine).*

With God's hand upon him and the Spirit of God directing him, David was given God's blueprints for the Temple. This is a very important principle – both for Solomon and for us. *Solomon was given wisdom by God and was the wisest king on earth. Yet he could not build God's Temple in his own wisdom. Why? Does God not accept our best efforts to please Him? No! God always rejects even our best fleshly efforts. What pleases Him is a life of faith that follows God's revealed will. Solomon, in all of his wisdom, could not build God's Temple by his own initiative, by his own power, or by his own design.*

The pattern for the Temple was much bigger than the wisest king on earth. *In a similar way, the purpose of God – and the pattern of God – for our lives is much too big for us.* We are foolish and unwise to believe we can establish the purpose for our lives and forsake God's greater purpose in Christ.

Why did the pattern of the Temple matter so much to David? If Solomon was so wise, why didn't God simply give him the assignment and let him use his wisdom, position, power and resources to complete the assignment? In other words, did God have to "micro-manage" the Temple construction?

To answer that, let's imagine Solomon *did* construct the Temple using his own wisdom. Hypothetically, what could have happened?

- Let us suppose that Solomon decided the location of the Temple would be better if it was built on the Mediterranean Sea so the world could better see the glory of God. But in fact, God had already chosen Jerusalem as the location.
- Suppose Solomon decided to build smaller Temples in Jerusalem, Bethel, Gilgal, and other important locations throughout Israel for easier access to the entire nation. After all,

wouldn't it have provided greater access and increased participation in the worship of God? However, God had already commanded that there was to be only one place of worship and sacrifice.

- Suppose Solomon decided to get the people of God more involved in the building project by allowing them to choose the colors and building materials. However, God had selected each color and material to reflect some aspect of the person and ministry of Jesus Christ.
- Suppose Solomon decided to add to the simple furniture of the Holy Place and Holy of Holies. But again, God had already given the pattern to be a figure of Christ.

The reality was that God already had revealed the pattern of design. All that Solomon had to do to please God and operate in faith was to follow the pattern he had been given.

Application

It's hard for us to accept the fact that there is nothing we can do to merit salvation. We believe we must *do* something ... when God says that His Son has done all that needs to be done on the cross. As the great hymn *Rock of Ages* says, *Nothing in my hand I bring: simply to the cross I cling!* If we believe that salvation is 99% what Jesus has done and 1% what we do, we have mixed grace and works ... and it becomes salvation by self-effort. The Apostle Paul clearly states, *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law* (Romans 3:28).

Most of us understand that. We agree that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. But when it comes to living the Christian life and walking with Jesus on a daily basis, we somehow believe our *self-effort* is needed. Our flesh wants to jump in and *contribute* ... when God calls us to *die* to our flesh and *submit* wholly to Him. We forget that *As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him* (Colossians 2:6). How did you receive Christ? *By grace through faith*. How are you to continue walking in Him? *By grace through faith*. 2 Corinthians 5:7 reinforces this idea: *For we walk by faith, not by sight*.

We are not to *invent* or *create* God's will and purpose for our lives. We are to *discover* it by walking with Him and studying His Word. He has given us *everything pertaining to life and godliness in Christ Jesus* (2 Peter 1:3).

Discussion Questions

1. How do you respond to the statement: *Rest is not inactivity. It is the abiding in and enabling of God's Spirit to do His greater purposes through us*. Why is it important to understand this definition of rest?

2. In what ways are you prone to fall into the trap of “the gospel of self-effort”? Why is it so hard for you to trust, to wait, and to submit?

3. Can you remember a time in your life when God told you specifically what to do (or what not to do)? Did you obey? What did your obedience to the specific and known will of God do for your walk with Him?

Prayer

Our Great God and Father, You are the One who goes before us. You have promised to be with us. You have promised to never leave us or forsake us. And You have commanded us to not fear or be dismayed. ¹⁹You have called us to walk by faith, not by sight. ²⁰ May I humble myself before You when I hear your Word. May it be more desirable to me than gold and sweeter to me than honey. ²¹ And may I respond in obedience, proving to be a doer of the Word and not merely a hearer. ²² In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

¹⁹ Deuteronomy 31:8

²⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:7

²¹ Psalm 19:10

²² James 1:22



Chapter Four

The Pattern and Christ - 2

Moses and The Tabernacle



Early in our ministry, in an effort to save money, my wife would sew clothes for her and me. She would begin by buying a “*pattern*” that showed her where to cut, where to place buttons and zippers, and the lines on which to sew the parts together. It brought great pleasure to her when I would preach in a coat she and made. Sewing was easy for her ... she simply did it by following the pattern.

In the previous chapter, we saw that Solomon constructed the Temple following the detailed blueprints God had given his father David. But the Temple wasn't Israel's first house of worship and sacrifice. Before the Temple, there was ... the Tabernacle. Before Solomon constructed the permanent Temple as Israel's place of worship, the nation worshiped God in a portable tent known as the Tabernacle.

As with the Temple, the design and construction of the Tabernacle was not left up to men. It originated with God's instruction to Moses on Mount Sinai in Exodus 25.

*And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the **pattern** of the tabernacle and the **pattern** of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.... And see to it that you make them according to the **pattern** which was shown you on the mountain (Exodus 25:8-9, 40; emphasis mine).*

Solomon's purpose was linked to God's revelation to David. And David's purpose was linked to Moses and the Tabernacle.

Moses was instructed by God to build the Tabernacle, the vessels, the priestly garments, and all the things related to the Temple according to a definite pattern. What was that pattern based on? The earthly Tabernacle was a reflection of the true Tabernacle in heaven. God designed His place of worship on earth to reflect the worship that was already taking place in heaven.

Upon receiving his building instructions, Moses obeyed and faithfully constructed the Tabernacle. He entered God's finished work and rest by his trust and obedience to God's purpose and pattern. Moses could not have known what to do apart from God's revelation. He heard God's plan and design – and then exercised faith and trust by obeying the instructions he had been given.

Moses pictures our rest by simply trusting and obeying God by not making his own way, but following God's way and building the Tabernacle according to the pattern he had been given on Mount Sinai. We must be careful also to submit to God's finished work in Christ and not offer our religious zeal as a substitute for the finished work of Christ on the cross. When we live by faith, we reflect the life of Christ.

The Heavenly Tabernacle

Before the Tabernacle on earth, there was ... the Tabernacle in heaven. When God gave Moses the pattern for the Tabernacle and its furniture, it reflected the eternal Sanctuary in heaven. Now notice the links: Solomon's purpose in building the Temple was linked to what God had revealed to his father David. David's purpose was linked to Moses and the Tabernacle revealed in Exodus 25. And now the earthly Tabernacle is linked to the eternal Tabernacle in heaven.

*Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer. For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve the **copy** and **shadow** of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the **pattern** shown you on the mountain."*

*Therefore it was necessary that the **copies** of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are **copies** of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Hebrews 8:1-5; 9:23-27; emphasis mine).*

The Eternal Christ

In these passages from the book of Hebrews, we see that the Temple Solomon was to build was linked to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. In reality, all of Scripture points to Christ. The Temple, the sacrifices, the priesthood, the Mercy Seat, the furniture, the veil, the Passover, and many other things are all shadows and types of the Lord Jesus Christ. God had a purpose for Solomon – but it was linked to God’s greater purpose in Christ.

Jesus knew that all the Scriptures pointed toward Him and reflected His eternal purpose. He said to the Pharisees, *You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me* (John 5:39). After the resurrection, He taught the disciples,

These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things (Luke 24:44-48).

There are three key principles to understand from this passage:

- Jesus Christ is on every page of the Old Testament. It all points toward Him. And on the road to Damascus, Jesus led the disciples on a “walk through the Old Testament,” showing Himself on every page.
- The disciples did not comprehend this until “*He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.*” Spiritual truths are spiritually appraised – and it begins with Jesus opening the eyes of our hearts.
- When we see Jesus, the Gospel and His purposes clearly, it always results in mission. “*Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things.*”

Personal Application

Are you beginning to understand that your life – your calling – and your purpose – must fit in to God’s greater purpose? *It’s not about you!* It’s about the eternal purposes and calling of God. Solomon was a son who had been promised the throne of David, but that position was only a part of the picture of the Greater Son of David who will reign in glory forever. *And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever* (2 Samuel 7:16). Solomon foreshadowed a *part* – but not the *whole*. The whole is Jesus.

Solomon had three choices:

- To refuse God’s purpose and not build the Temple.
- To build the Temple by his own plans and wisdom.
- To trust and obey God, submitting to His greater purpose in Christ and build the Temple according to the pattern already revealed.

Solomon not only had the pattern of how to construct the temple; he was also given the power of the Holy Spirit to complete the work. David said to his son Solomon, *“Be strong and of good courage, and do it; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD God—my God—will be with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD (1 Chronicles 28:20-21).*

Our calling is two-fold:

- To become more and more like Jesus Christ. Romans 8:29 tells us that God’s end-goal in our lives is that we have been *“predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.”* How are you doing in that calling? Are you more like Jesus than you were last year? Is He changing you, conforming you to His image?
- We are also to discover the pattern of Christ, to see what God is doing in the world and to join Him in that task. This is our *mission*. To say we follow God and yet remain unengaged in His activity in the world is to give mere lip service to being His follower.

Once we discover God’s pattern in Scripture, then we make it a principle of our life and repeat it over and over again as a way of life. Jesus told us to go into all the world, sharing the life-changing message of the Gospel as we go. This became a pattern in the life of Bill Bright that he shared with thousands of Christians. Early in my Christian life, I read a series of his booklets called *“The Transferable Concepts.”* What made such an impact on me was that the Biblical pattern could be reproduced in the lives of others, who would teach others, who could in turn teach it to many others.²³ This principle of spiritual multiplication produces eternal results.

Bill Bright came to faith in Christ as a young, successful businessman. He was discipled by leaders in His church, which helped him grow in his new relationship with Jesus. At the same time, he was working with the college department at his church and developed a passion to see the Great Commission fulfilled in this generation. He asked himself, *“What is the best way to see that accomplished?”* The answer became obvious to him . . . and he ultimately founded *Campus Crusade for Christ*, one of the most effective missions organizations in this century in winning people to Christ, building disciples, and sending them to reach the world.

But evangelism is not simply one of Campus Crusade for Christ’s distinctives; it was Bill Bright’s passion.

One day Bill flew into the Salt Lake City airport. As he took the escalator down to wait for his luggage, he saw a man at the Hertz Rental Car stand that was not busy. Bill went up and initiated a conversation about Christ. He said, *“Has anyone ever told you how you can make the wonderful discovery of knowing Jesus personally?”* The man said, *“Yes!”* Bill responded, *“Who was it and what did they say?”* The man surprised Bill when he said, *“It was **you!**”*

Shocked, Bill asked him to refresh his memory. The man said, *“About a year ago, you flew into the Salt Lake City airport. You took the escalator down to wait for your luggage. While you were waiting, you came over and asked me that same question: ‘Has anyone ever told you how you can make the wonderful discovery of knowing Jesus personally?’ That day, I prayed to receive Christ into my life. I went home and shared the message with my wife and kids. They all prayed*

²³ 2 Timothy 2:2

to receive Christ. Later, I shared the Gospel with members of our extended family – and so far, fifteen of them have come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior!”

What an impact – all because one man, in love with Jesus and overflowing with His message to others – took the initiative to share Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We may never fully see how our lives fit into the whole of God’s plan. It is certainly understood progressively. But it is foolish to live our lives as though it was all about us. We are *in Christ*, members of His Body, and must cease from determining our own goals and dreams. We must seek God and ask Him to direct our steps by His Word. God can do more through us in five minutes than we can do in a lifetime on our own. Let’s follow Him with our whole hearts!

Reflection Questions

1. Be honest: how much of your life is about *you* – and how much of your life is about *Jesus*?
2. Can you describe a time where you really wanted something – only to discover that God had other plans? How did you respond? Is the pattern of your life best described as *selfish disobedience* or *selfless sacrifice*?
3. In what ways has God *opened your understanding* so that you have seen His plans and purposes for your life?

Prayer

O Jesus, I would have loved to be with You on that road to Damascus as You led the disciples through the Old Testament.²⁴ What a clear and refreshing perspective I would have had, seeing You on every page of those thirty-nine books. And yet Your Spirit lives in me, leading and guiding me into all truth.²⁵ I invite you, Holy Spirit, to reveal Jesus to me. Open my understanding, that I might see Him clearly. And then empower me²⁶ to be Your witness in the world. Progressively lead me into a clear understanding of how I fit into God’s greater purpose in Christ. Amen.

²⁴ Luke 24:44-48

²⁵ John 16:13

²⁶ Acts 1:8



Chapter Five

The Pattern and Christ - 3



The Father's Mission of Searching for His Lost Children

In 1989, an 8.2 earthquake almost flattened Armenia, killing over 30,000 people in less than four minutes. In the midst of utter devastation and chaos, a father left his wife securely at home and rushed to the school where his son was supposed to be, only to discover that the building was as flat as a pancake. After the traumatic initial shock, he remembered the promise he had made to his son: *"No matter what, I'll always be there for you!"* And tears began to fill his eyes. As he looked at the pile of debris that once was the school, it looked hopeless, but he kept remembering his commitment to his son.

He began to concentrate on where he walked his son to class at school each morning. Remembering his son's classroom would be in the back right corner of the building, he rushed there and started digging through the rubble.

As he was digging, other forlorn parents arrived, clutching their hearts, and saying, "My son!" "My daughter!" Other well-meaning parents tried to pull him off of what was left of the school saying, *"It's too late!" "They're dead!" "You can't help!" "Go home!" "Come on, face reality, there's nothing you can do!" "You're just going to make matters worse!"* To each parent he responded with one line: *"Are you going to help me now?"* And then he proceeded to dig for his son, stone by stone.

The fire chief showed up and tried to pull him off of the school's debris saying, *"Fires are breaking out, explosions are happening everywhere. You're in danger. We'll take care of it. Go home."* To which this loving, caring Armenian father asked, *"Are you going to help me now?"* The police came and said, *"You're angry, distraught and it's over. You're endangering others. Go home. We'll handle it!"* To which he replied, *"Are you going to help me now?"* No one helped.

Courageously he proceeded alone because he needed to know for himself: *"Is my boy alive or is he dead?"* He dug for 8 hours, 12 hours, 24 hours, and 36 hours. Then, in the 38th hour, he pulled back a boulder and heard his son's voice. He screamed his son's name, *"ARMAND!"* He heard back, *"Dad!?! It's me, Dad! I told the other kids not to worry. I told them that if you were alive, you'd save me and when you saved me, they'd be saved. You promised, 'No matter what, I'll always be there for you!' You did it, Dad!"*

"What's going on in there? How is it?" the father asked. *"There are 14 of us left out of 33, Dad. We're scared, hungry, thirsty and thankful you're here. When the building collapsed, it made a wedge, like a triangle, and it saved us."*

"Come on out, boy!" *"No, Dad! Let the other kids out first, 'cause I know you'll get me! No matter what, I know you'll be there for me!"*²⁷

Jesus said He came *"to seek and save the lost."* Like Armand's father, He passionately pursues lost people – because they matter to Him. He will always be there for us. That's part of God's greater purpose in Christ.

- Did you sense God's pursuit of you before you came to Christ for salvation? Before you ever sought Him, He sought you, found you and drew you to Himself.
- Do you sense God's pursuit of you now as you walk with Him in the Christian life? He passionately pursues you today, inviting you into fellowship with Him to experience His greater purpose in Christ.

The Pattern of Christ Lifted Up on the Cross



We saw in the previous chapter that Jesus Christ is on every page of the Old Testament. Sometimes it is in veiled form; other times it appears very clear – as when Israel disobeyed God in the wilderness. They grumbled and complained – and so God sent fiery serpents among the people.

So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived (Numbers 21:6-9).

²⁷ Canfield, Jack and Hansen, Mark V. *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, Inc., 1993.

Jesus picked up on this imagery and saw a picture of Himself being lifted up on the cross to die for the sins of the world. He said,

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:14-16).

We can draw the following principles from these two passages:

- The people of Israel sinned against God and deserved judgment. So do we.
- The serpent represents the curse of sin as it brings death to those who are bitten.
- That which is cursed is placed upon the pole and lifted up, representing Jesus being made a curse for us on the cross.
- The Gospel is preached in the simple message of faith: “*Look and live,*” just as it is in the preaching of the Cross: “*Look to Christ and His death on the cross and live.*”

When God told Moses to do all things according to the pattern that was shown him on Mount Sinai, it was important that he trusted and obeyed God, for God was giving him (and us) a shadow of his greater purpose in Christ.

Moses’ purpose was not to substitute his plan for God’s. He probably did not understand why he was to make a brass serpent and lift it up for all of Israel to see, but he was to trust and obey. Any deviation from God’s revealed pattern would have *marred the pattern and picture of Christ in the future.*

- Galatians 3:13 says, *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.”*
- Christ would be seen in each offering instituted in the Old Testament sacrificial law: the burnt offering, the sin offering, the trespass offering, etc.
- The sacrificial lamb of Exodus 11-12 is a picture of *Christ our Passover, who is sacrificed for us* (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Each piece of the redemption-puzzle is placed by God to reveal the whole of God’s great redemption in Christ.

The Pattern Distorted by Moses

Immediately after their deliverance from Egypt, Israel began grumbling and complaining. In their need for water, Israel complained again to God.

And the LORD said to Moses, “Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of

the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?" (Exodus 17:5-7).

- Israel sinned by not trusting God when they were thirsty and lacked water.
- More than physical water, Israel needed the true Living Water of Life, Jesus.
- The rod of God had been used in the judgment against Egypt.
- God and Jesus are seen as our Rock of Salvation.
- The rod striking the rock only once is seen as the judgment of God striking Jesus once and for all for the sins of the world.

The Apostle Paul would look back on this incident and remind his readers that Israel drank of the spiritual rock that was Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 10:3-4).

So far so good! But later in their journey (Numbers 20), Israel is again confronted with a lack of water. Again they grumble. They gathered against Moses and Aaron and contended with them. In verse 6, they wisely go to seek God, who appears to them in full glory:

So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the glory of the LORD appeared to them. Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals." So Moses took the rod from before the LORD as He commanded him.

And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?" Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank. Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." This was the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the LORD, and He was hallowed among them (Numbers 20:6-13).

Notice that God said to Moses, "*speak to the rock.*" He didn't tell him to strike it, as He did in Exodus 17. But now, in one moment, Moses disobeys and moves outside of God's will. Besides disobeying God's command, He distorted the pattern. Christ would be struck just one time for the sins of the world. Once the judgment of sin took place on Calvary once and for all, salvation was accomplished. Now Christ's high priestly ministry is to intercede for us – not to die for us again and again. We now speak to the Rock of Salvation in heaven.

You may question here, "*What's the big deal whether he strikes the rock or speaks to it? The point was thirsty people got the water they needed!*" But remember that Moses was called to obey God and reflect Christ. It was not about Moses being exalted among the people of God.

Because Moses disobeyed God, the pattern of Christ our sacrifice being struck just one time for the sins of the world was compromised. In addition, the picture of Christ as our High Priest through whom we speak and pray to the Father was compromised.

Application

We must ask ourselves, “*If God has a purpose for my life, does He also have a pattern for my life to fulfill that purpose? How would I find that pattern in order to fit into God’s greater purpose in Christ?*”

This is a critical question in a time when there is so much focus on having a purpose for our lives. I am afraid that the truth that God has a purpose for our lives has been secularized and distorted.

Answering the following questions will move us into discovering the pattern of God for our lives:

- Do I have a pattern of reading and applying the Word of God in my life?
- Do I have a pattern of service and servanthood in the church?
- Do I have a pattern of stewardship in the church?
- Do I have a pattern of spiritual leadership in my home?
- Do I have a pattern of evangelism to the lost world?
- Do I have a pattern of prayer and worshiping God?
- Do I have a pattern of walking in the Spirit and living day by day empowered by Him?
- Do I have a pattern of walking in a love relationship with Jesus?

If we think we can live a life of purpose without also living a life following the pattern of God, we will experience the same futility of life that Solomon did. The two are inseparable.

Entering the faith-rest life comes by ceasing from our efforts to establish a new pattern and discovering the pattern that God has already established and entering into it. When we innovate a new pattern in our lives and ministry, our focus shifts from the pattern and principles that the Bible has established. What results does not reflect the Lord Jesus as God intends – it is simply a weak caricature.

There is a difference between accommodation to culture to reach people for Christ and compromising Scripture to reach people. The Apostle Paul never compromised the Gospel, but he did become “*all things to all men to reach all.*”

Reflection Questions

If we build our life, family, church, ministry and business on the pattern of Christ, then the following common elements should be preeminent. As you read these, take the time to reflect on your life and ministry, asking God to shine the light of His truth on motives and actions:

- *The pattern of total dependence on the Lord Jesus.* We must acknowledge our helplessness to produce eternal fruit, and become dependent on the Vine-branch relationship seen in John 15.

- *The pattern of the Word of God.* When we are resting in God’s pattern, the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to reveal Christ, sin and self. He builds faith, converts the lost and reveals His will to us.
- *The pattern of prayer.* Jesus not only modeled the pattern of a prayer life, but He taught us to pray to the Father in His name. When we accomplish much without prayer, we are probably building on a temporary foundation.
- *The pattern of humility.* What God builds is for the glory of the Lord Jesus. When Peter suggested on the Mount of Transfiguration that they also build a tabernacle for Moses and Elijah, God’s rebuke was clear: He would not share His glory with another. “*This is my beloved Son, hear Him!*”(Matthew 17:5). When a ministry is built on the personality or talent of an individual, then the foundation is temporal.
- *The pattern of the Holy Spirit.* This pattern cannot be deviated from. God builds on His once-and-for-all foundation through the power of the Holy Spirit. Man tries to reform himself, while the Holy Spirit alone regenerates and gives a new heart. Man tries to manipulate while the Holy Spirit gives deep conviction of sin and empowerment to change. Man tries to stress talent and ability, while the Holy Spirit gives enabling gifts to empower and motivate all of God’s people for ministry.
- *The pattern of worship.* The pattern of worship is to please God, not man. Thus the words of praise should be foremost. Our worship should not be attractive to the world, but to God.
- *The pattern of stewardship.* The pattern of God involves the believers being faithful with the money God has entrusted to him. The tithe to the local church must not be deviated from, and the liberty of the free will offering above the tithe should be Holy Spirit led.
- *The pattern of service.* The pattern of greatness is through service. Each believer is to model the servanthood of Christ in his family, the church, and the world.
- *The pattern of evangelism.* The pattern of Christ to seek and to save the lost must not be abandoned if we are to build on the pattern of Christ.
- *The pattern of discipleship.* The pattern of Christ is clear – that those who are saved are to mature and multiply. Our ministry must include reproducing ourselves in the ministry of those who are faithful to grow.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, I do not want to seek my own purpose in the world. My desire is to follow You, to seek Your purpose, according to Your plan and pattern revealed in Your Word. I affirm that all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable to teach me, to reprove me, to correct me, and to train me in righteousness, that I may be adequate, equipped for every good work.²⁸ May I be diligent to present myself approved to You as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.²⁹ Spirit of God, please take the Word of God and drive it deeply into the heart of this servant, that I may be molded and shaped by it, being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.³⁰ I pray this in the matchless name of Jesus, my Savior. Amen.

²⁸ 2 Timothy 3:16-17

²⁹ 2 Timothy 2:15

³⁰ Romans 8:29



Chapter Six

The Preparation and Christ - 1

Introduction



In 1938, Gary Cooper rejected the lead role in an upcoming movie. He said, "*Gone with the Wind is going to be the biggest flop in Hollywood history. I'm just glad it'll be Clark Gable who's falling flat on his face and not Gary Cooper.*"

In 1899, Charles H. Duell, Commissioner of *U.S. Office of Patents*, wrote a letter urging President William McKinley to abolish his office. He stated, "*Everything that can be invented has been invented.*"

Charles Taze Russell, Founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, wrote in his book, *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 3, 1910 edition*: "*The deliverance of the saints must take place sometime **before** 1914.*" The 1923 edition changed that prediction slightly: "*The deliverance of the saints must take place sometime **after** 1914.*"³¹

If someone could tell you predictions about your future, what would you like to know? Would you like to know whom you would marry? How many kids you will have? How about which stocks to invest in for the next decade? Or how about something as simple as which questions will be on your exam next Friday?

You know, there's a lot of difference between someone telling you what they *think* will happen in the future and what *will* happen in the future. What would it take for you to be confident that these predictions are accurate?

³¹ These quotes come from Henry Oursler's book on preaching, *How to Talk So People Will Listen*, Nashville: TightRope Communications, 2009.

The answer is two-fold. First, it lies in the power of the one making the statements. Does he or she really know the future? The second is in the difference between a prediction (a guess) and a promise (a certainty).

God knows the future. He sees it clearly, because He is sovereignly in control over it. The Bible contains hundreds of prophecies and predictions about the future. There are over 300 prophecies alone that were fulfilled in the first coming of Christ. His promises are sure; His Word is certain. He will not lie.

He has established our steps and purpose.³² God's established purpose was for David to make preparations for the building of the Temple – and for Solomon to construct it.

Thus far we have seen that God prepared His purpose and pattern for Solomon and God's Temple before Solomon was even born. Now we will see through David that God made preparations for the accomplishment of that purpose. Solomon entered God's rest, not by inventing a purpose, but by discovering God's greater purpose in Christ and how God planned for him to fit into it.

David Made Preparations for His Son Solomon to Finish the Temple



David made detailed preparations for the building of the Temple and prepared Solomon thoroughly before his death.

*Then David said, "This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of burnt offering for Israel." So David commanded to gather the aliens who were in the land of Israel; and he appointed masons to cut hewn stones to build the house of God. And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails of the doors of the gates and for the joints, and bronze in abundance beyond measure, and cedar trees in abundance; for the Sidonians and those from Tyre brought much cedar wood to David. Now David said, "Solomon my son is young and inexperienced, and the house to be built for the LORD must be exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorious throughout all countries. **I will now make preparation for it.**" So David made abundant preparations before his death.... Indeed **I have taken much trouble to prepare** for the house of the LORD one hundred thousand talents of gold and one million talents of silver, and bronze and iron beyond measure, for it is so abundant. I have prepared timber and stone also, and you may add to them (1 Chronicles 22:1-6, 14; emphasis mine).*

David had prepared billions of dollars of gold and silver to build the Temple. He set aside enough money that Solomon would have no lack in building the Temple. "One hundred thousand talents of gold" would amount to \$320 billion today.³³ "One million talents of silver" at \$12 an ounce would be valued at \$192 billion.³⁴ When you add the "bronze and iron beyond

³² Jeremiah 29:11-14

³³ According to *Strong's Enhanced Lexicon*, a talent of gold weighed about 200 pounds. If we factor that gold at \$1,000 an ounce, in today's economy: 1000,000 talents x 200 pounds x 16 ounces x \$1,000 per ounce of gold = \$320,000,000,000.

³⁴ A talent of silver weighed 100 pounds. The calculation is as follows: 1,000,000,000 x 100 pounds x 16 ounces x \$12 = \$192,000,000,000.

measure,” it seems that David had saved over \$500 billion to complete the building of the temple.

What God called Solomon to do, He also provided the resources to accomplish it. Solomon did not lack anything in completing God’s assignment. Later, he was allowed to participate along with the people in free-will offerings, but all that was needed was provided beforehand. This is a wonderful picture for us in fulfilling the purpose of God for our lives. We have already been blessed in the heavenly places in Christ with all that is needed to please God and fulfill His purpose for our lives (Ephesians 1:3-5).

Jesus Made Preparations for Our Salvation and Home in Heaven

In a much greater way, Jesus provided for and encouraged us before His death. Remember His words:

Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also (John 14:1-3).

Revelation 21 describes the city that Jesus has gone to prepare. It’s cubic measurements (1,600 miles long, wide and high) make Disney World look like a small closet!

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.... The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel’s measurement. The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass. And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb (Revelation 21:1-2, 16-22).

In describing the elements that went into the construction of the New Jerusalem, John describes every kind of precious jewel known in the first century. The take-away is simple: we have a great home awaiting us in eternity!

Jesus Made Greater Preparations to Build His Church

Jesus Himself has prepared all that we need to build the Church and fulfill our greater purpose in Christ. Solomon built a Temple where God would dwell temporarily; Jesus, through His finished work of salvation, made us the temple of God where His Spirit dwells permanently. He promised that He would build His Church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18).

How did Jesus make these preparations? He lived the perfect life that God's righteousness demanded. He was tempted to sin, yet never succumbed. He went to the cross and took the full justice and wrath of God against our sin in His substitutionary death. On the third day, He rose victorious over death, confirming our victory over sin, self, Satan, death and hell. He ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He ever lives to make intercession for us.

He has prepared abundantly for us – and He will complete the good work, which He began in us and has called us to do. Two passages from Paul's letter to the Philippians will help us here:

Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6).

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13).

Application: The Role of the Holy Spirit in God's Greater Purpose

The preparations that David made to build the Temple were abundant. However, the preparations that Jesus made for us far exceed that of David. He gave us more than the temporal; He gave us the eternal Spirit of God permanently dwelling in our lives. When Solomon finished the Temple, the glory of God filled the Temple by the Holy Spirit (2 Chronicles 7:1-4). But when the Spirit of God came to dwell in us, we have something far greater.

Ephesians 2:10 says, "*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*" There is a phrase in that verse that intrigues me. It is the phrase, which *God prepared beforehand*. God has established His purpose for us long before we were born. And the purpose of these prepared-in-advance works is not that we "*work in them,*" but that we "*walk in them.*" This does not mean doing a work for God; instead, it is God's performing His work in and through us in the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul reinforces this idea in Philippians 2:13 when he says, "*For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*"

My heart is moved as I also think of the Lord Jesus, who, before His death, made all the preparations needed for my salvation and my eternal home in heaven. All I had to do was by faith enter into His great, finished and complete work of salvation on my behalf.

The Spirit of God comes to empower the child of God through the Word of God to do the will of God according to the purpose of God. Consider the following passages from God's Word:

He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:38-39).

And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you (John 14:16-17).

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (John 14:26-27).

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you (John 16:13-14).

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you (Romans 8:9-11).

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

Assignment

Take the seven passages listed above and create a list of the truths about the Spirit of God:

1. What do these passages teach you about whom the Holy Spirit is and why He came?

2. According to these New Testament passages, what does the Holy Spirit want to do in and through your life?

Prayer

Father in heaven, I praise You for my salvation. I am completely forgiven – forever! ³⁵ You have blessed me with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. ³⁶ Jesus, in You and You alone, I find redemption, forgiveness, health, hope and life. ³⁷ And Holy Spirit, You have come to apply the work of Christ to my life. And so I cry out with the hymn-writer, Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me. Melt me, mold me, fill me, and use me. Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me! Amen.

³⁵ Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 44:22; Romans 8:1

³⁶ Ephesians 1:3

³⁷ Colossians 1:13-14