

# SERMON GUIDE

## The Eternal Plan of God

### John 1:1-3



#### SERMON NOTES

Here's where I'm going with today's message: The prophecy and plan of God to rescue and redeem a people for Himself from every nation was not a reaction to sin, but an eternal plan from the foundation of the world. The Christmas Story does not begin in Bethlehem or in Jerusalem. These places will play a grand part of God's redeeming story. But it doesn't start there. It doesn't begin in Ur with the call of Abraham. It doesn't even begin at Creation. It was before anything was made. This is one of those messages that shocks the system, pops braincells, challenges preconceived notions, and expands your wonder and awe of God in incredible ways. For most, whether you were raised in church or not, you were not raised on Big God theology. Most of us were never pointed to God's sovereignty over all things, even salvation and the eternal plan to create a people for Himself. Most of us were only taught Christianity as a proposition. Meaning: you are sinner, God sent His Son to die for sinners, and if you trust Him you can be saved and forgiven. Do you want to follow Jesus? Yes. Call upon His name. Boom. We're in. Now we learn and grow and follow Jesus. That's about it for most folks, and that is still about it for most in our society. That's their understanding of Christianity, even many in churches. But the Bible goes way deeper. Studying theology can take us to places of great mystery and depths that it feels like we're over our skis and into uncharted territory. One of those big things is the mystery of God's sovereign plan over salvation from the foundation of the world.

#### Exegesis

**John 1:1-3 – <sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.**

In John 1:14 we read John's words that the Word, who is the Eternal Son of God, became flesh and dwelt among us. The eternal Word, the Second Person of the Trinity, became flesh. God became a man. That's the story of Christmas. But before the God the Son became flesh, He existed eternally within the Godhead. One God in three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They are 1, but 3. They are not different manifestations of each other. The Father is not the Son,

the Son is not the Father, and so on. John introduces us to Jesus, not in Bethlehem like Matthew and Luke, or in Nazareth like Mark, but in eternity. He is the Word from the beginning who has always existed. He was with God and is God. That's our introduction to Jesus from John. The Word became flesh and His name was Jesus. To do what? To seek and save lost sinners. To purchase His bride. To gather His sheep.

Now here is the question: when was it determined that the Word from the beginning would become flesh? At what point was this decision made? Many will reactively or instinctively say: at the Fall. When the first people sinned against God in the Garden in Genesis 3, the plan was enacted. That's what many will say. They'll point to Genesis 3:15 where God foretells the day when the serpent will be crushed by the heel of the offspring of the woman. So there is a promise of a serpent crusher. Satan and what he has wrought with the sin of mankind will be undone. Jesus is the fulfillment of this promise. But again, I want to go back to when it was decided that the Word would become flesh.

I want to propose to you today, from Scripture, that this was not a decision made in the Garden, but before the world was made. This is the eternal plan of God. Let's explore just a few key passages that clue us in on this reality. The Father's grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began and revealed through His incarnation. The plan existed before the creation of the world. It is an eternal plan.

There are names written in a book. Those names will be faithful to Jesus and not worship the beast. Their names being written or not written will be the decisive factor in whether they follow Jesus or the Beast. And those names were not written after they acted, they were written before the foundation of the world. The names are written in a book with a title: The Life of the Lamb Who Was Slain. And this book existed in eternity before Creation. Jesus is called the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Meaning, Jesus' sacrifice was foreordained. The eternal plan of redemption is a unified Trinitarian reality.

Peter's statement in Acts 2:23 is that Jesus was delivered up (to be crucified) according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. The cross was not an afterthought or reaction, but a part of God's eternal decree, His definite plan.

The Christmas story is not about God's reaction to sin in the world, but a part of His eternal plan to save a people for Himself. It is a Trinitarian plan (the Father sends the Son, the Son atones for sin, and the Spirit regenerates sinners from death to life to faith). This reality points us to the doctrine of election and predestination where God demonstrates His sovereign grace in saving a people for Himself, not because of their works, by His own good pleasure and wisdom.

### **Close**

There are so many more things that could be said about these things today. These are mind-blowing truths. They are truths contained in passages that we rarely ever had anybody walk through with us, and I would say this: to our detriment. It is these kinds of truths that anchor our hearts in God's wisdom and power. It's these kinds of truths that flatten our pride and ego to recognize that had God not chosen us, called us, and kept us, we would never seek Him. These truths stir our hearts and boggle our minds.

Do you have to understand all of this to delight in it? No. Is there more to explore or questions that emerge as you study this? Absolutely, and you don't have to be afraid to study these things. But above all things, you don't want to simply play around with these things as candy for the mind. You want to clamp down on these things as food for the soul. These are heart anchoring realities. I'll close with how Paul talks about the beauty of Christ's redemption to sinners.



- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you grow in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you go to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?
- What is a sin you have been struggling with that you need to repent of?



- **REVIEW**

- Read John 1:1-18 and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different translation.
- Additional Scripture
  - Acts 2:23
  - Romans 9:6-13
  - Ephesians 1:3-10
  - 1 Timothy 1:12-16
  - 2 Timothy 1:8-10
  - Revelation 13:8
- What big takeaways did you have from the sermon?
  - What did this teach you about God?
  - What did this teach you about man?
  - What did this teach you about salvation?

- **REFLECT**

- Why does John refer to Jesus as the Word?
- Why does John begin his gospel with the phrase “in the beginning”?
- Reflect on Acts 2:23. How does the fact that Christ was given up according to the plan of God impact your understanding of the cross?
- What does it mean that the plan of salvation was established before the foundation of the world?
- How does each person of the Trinity work to accomplish the plan of salvation?

- **RESPOND**

- What is a practical step you can take as a result of this sermon?
- How does seeing the Christmas story as part of an eternal plan change the way you view the birth of Christ?
- The sermon mentions these truths as "food for the soul." How can you incorporate these truths into your daily life to deepen your faith and awe of God?
- How might this broader understanding of God’s plan influence the way you share the gospel with others?

- **MEMORIZE**

- **Isaiah 9:2 – *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.***



- **BUILD UP:** How will you grow in your love and knowledge of the Lord this week? We have several discipleship opportunities for you to participate in.
  - **MDWK** is a time of education and growth in order to build up the Journey Church body. We offer a handful of intentionally chosen classes that cover a broad range of topics and

are taught by quality teachers from within our congregation. Classes are at 6:30p every Wednesday. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.

- **TJC Women** seeks to equip women to be rooted in the Word of God and bold in their faith. Our events and small groups focus on letting the gospel shape all spheres of our lives. Gather is the first Saturday of every month. Contact Laura DiLeonardi (laura@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **TJC Men** exists to equip men to show Jesus as incomparably glorious in every sphere of their lives. The men's ministry meets on the 2nd Saturday of every month at 8:00a in the student center. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **TJC Students** is passionate to see every parent equipped, every leader developed, and every student disciplined into baptized, self-feeding, disciple making followers of Jesus who are letting the gospel shape every sphere of their lives. Our student ministry meets on Wednesday nights from 6:00p-7:30p for MDWK worship and Sunday mornings at 8:30a and 10:00a for small group. Contact Larry Davis (larry@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **TJC Kids** believes that the Gospel saves, sanctifies, gathers and sends. It is our desire to see our kids understand that the Gospel truly does change everything and we will do this primarily by teaching our kids to love Jesus, showing them they can have fun in the process, and making sure they stay safe. Contact Nick Judd (nick@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **TJC Young Adults** exists to equip young adults ages 18 to 29 in becoming passionate followers of Jesus who enter their life in Christ. We do this through intentional relationships, fellowship, and worship centered around the gospel. The Fount meets Tuesdays at 7:00p. Contact Hunter Christian (hunter@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **SEND OUT:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story, your story, or the gospel? We have several opportunities for local and international missions.
  - **For the City:** Acts 1:8 calls us to be engaged where we live and among the nations. The people of TJC seek to bring truth, grace, and hope to Lebanon and the surrounding area by mobilizing the church to be salt and light, not only for the city, but for your city. Take part in faithfully and obediently using your gifts to declare God's glory among those who are hopeless living among you today. Contact Jeff Long (jeff@tjclive.com) for more information.
  - **For the Nations:** At TJC we exist to show Jesus as incomparably glorious to Lebanon and beyond. We are ambitious and passionate about strategically taking an active role in finishing the Great Commission as we actively pursue the unreached peoples of the world by mobilizing the entire church to pray, send, go and welcome international friends among us. Contact Shawn Casto (shawn@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **PRAYER**
  - **Pray over any request from your group members.**
  - **Pray for our directional elders:** Brett Perkins (Worship Pastor)
  - **Pray for our replanters:** Christ's Fellowship (Gallatin)

- **Pray for our short-term teams:**
  - Central Asia Team departing on March 7, 2025
  - Southeast Asia Team departing on March 7, 2025
  - Europe Team departing on March 21, 2025
  - Southeast Asia Team #2 departing on April 25, 2025
- **Pray for our long-term units on the field:**
  - The Wilsons
  - The Grays
  - The Starks
- **Pray for the unreached.** Want to keep up with Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>