

COURSE 8

GOD'S OVERALL PLAN AND PATTERN FOR MANKIND

In this Course we will step back and examine the bigger picture of God's plan for mankind from the beginning. This will then set the stage for a deeper look into the twelve breads to see what God was showing in this Temple bread service. After all, God has a purpose and a plan for His people, and the pattern for this has been shown throughout history.

In the scriptures, we first see this plan in Genesis 1:26:

^{NAS} Genesis 1:26a Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;

This pattern (form, model, figure) and plan is also later seen in Noah, Moses, King David, and symbolically in the twelve breads (Showbread). The plan shows the path to coming into God's likeness and the way of escape from the hour of tribulation that will soon come upon the world (as was pictured through Noah and the Ark).

God's Plan from the Beginning

From the beginning God kept showing His plan, and throughout history He revealed a pattern that pointed to His own image and likeness that He wanted man to come into. For instance, He made Adam in His own image:

^{NAS} Genesis 1:26a Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;

^{NAS} Genesis 1:27 And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

We see this plan fulfilled in the Messiah, who was the *true* plan and pattern of the Showbread (as we will see in Course 9). God's will is that we also come into this same image that Christ came into, as the following scriptures show:

^{NAS} 2 Corinthians 4:4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of **Christ, who is the image of God.**

^{NAS} 2 Corinthians 3:18 But **we all**, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed into the same image** from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

^{NAS} Ephesians 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, **to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ.**

As a side note, it is probably true that in Genesis 1:26 God is speaking to Christ *prophetically*, and in a sense also to all those who work with God toward this end of fulfilling this scripture, both before and after Christ (John 5:17; Hebrews 4:11; Revelation 19:7). In the same way that God spoke prophetically to King Cyrus more than a century before Cyrus was born (Isaiah 45:1–6), God also speaks to the Messiah prophetically in Isaiah and in the Psalms:

^{NIV} Isaiah 42:6 “I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles,

^{NIV} Psalm 110:1 Of David. A psalm. The LORD says to my lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”

It is clear that this statement in Genesis 1:26 (“Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness”) was spoken before Adam was created, and God was not speaking to another God for there is only one God (Isaiah 45:5, 6, 21). Nor was God conversing with angels, for they are not in His image and likeness and are only a little above man in this realm (Psalm 8:4–6; Hebrews 2:7–9).

Whether one agrees with the prophetic nature of Genesis 1:26 or not, it cannot be disputed that it was God’s desire to make man *in His image*, and that is what He did with Adam (Genesis 1:27). The “likeness” was to come as Adam walked with God and dwelt in His presence.

This theme keeps playing out in various generations in various ways, until the coming of the true pattern for God’s plan—the Messiah—who was not only in God’s image but also His likeness.

The Pattern Given to Noah in Type

When God told Noah to construct an ark in which he and his family would be saved, He was also pointing ahead and using the type of Noah to warn us of future things for which we should prepare and make ready:

^{NAS} Genesis 6:15a “And this is how you shall make it:

Then God went on to give Noah the *pattern* for the natural ark, which, when built as commanded, would provide safety for Noah and his family to escape the coming flood.

^{NAS} Genesis 6:22 Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.

This natural ark is a *type* that prefigures the spiritual ark to come in the promised New Covenant time. Jesus (Yeshua) tells us below that his next coming will be just like the days of Noah. This means that we will be constructing a *spiritual* ark, just as Noah built a *natural* ark, and that by doing this exactly according to the pattern that God wants (i.e., Messiah, the true pattern), we will be taken safely away into His presence:

^{NAS} Matthew 24:37 “For the coming of the Son of Man will be **just like** the days of Noah.

^{NAS} Matthew 24:38 “For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage,¹⁸⁸ until the day that Noah entered the ark,

^{NAS} Matthew 24:39 and **they** did not understand until the flood came and **took** them¹⁸⁹ all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.

In verse 39, “they” who “did not understand” refers to those left behind in the flood. It is also important to understand that “took them away all” (see footnote 189) does not refer to those drowned in the flood, as we might expect, but rather to those taken away safely in the Ark with Noah. The Greek word *airw*, translated as “took,” means “to elevate, lift up, or carry away” (our English word “air” stems from this). Those who were taken away safely were those sons of Noah and their wives who remained faithful and worked on the Ark with Noah.

188 There is, of course, nothing wrong with eating, drinking, or marrying; it just shows that outward life was taking place as normal until the flood came.

189 The word “them” is not in the Greek. It reads “took away all,” referring to those in the Ark.

Jesus thus shows that Noah and the Ark were a *type* of the spiritual ark—those who allow the spirit of God to shape them into the pattern that He wants. Noah's sons and their wives simply had to continue working with Noah as God gave direction. They did not have to be great in themselves or possess any super qualities, only be willing to follow God and to work on the Ark according to His pattern.

God used the flood to take Noah and his family safely away; in connecting the last half of verse 39 with verse 40, Jesus then continues this same theme in the scriptures that follow in reference to the future catching away of the believers, the spiritual ark:

^{NAS} Matthew 24:39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.

^{NAS} Matthew 24:40 “Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be **taken**, and one will be left.

^{NAS} Matthew 24:41 “Two women *will be* grinding at the mill; one will be **taken**, and one will be left.

^{NAS} Matthew 24:42 “Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.

The Greek word for “coming” in verse 39 above is *parousia*, which can also mean “presence,” either physically on earth or by the Lord’s presence in the air. Here it refers to the Messiah’s presence in the air, which will occur at the rapture (or at the “catching away,” for those who do not like the term “rapture”). Those *taken* in verses 40–41 correspond to those taken away safely to God in verse 39.

Parousia is also translated as “coming” in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 in the same context of our being “caught up” (4:17) to meet the Messiah in the *air* at the rapture:

^{NAS} 1 Thessalonians 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.

^{NAS} 1 Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise¹⁹⁰ first.

190 “Rise” here refers to believers who have died yet will rise out of their graves upon the earth first, before then being caught up.

^{NAS} 1 Thessalonians 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be **caught up together with them** in the clouds¹⁹¹ **to meet the Lord in the air**, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.

Some may dismiss this as pie in the sky, but there is no pie here at all; this is people rising up in the air to be with the Lord forever. This is not the second coming, which will follow later, but the Lord's presence (*parousia*) in the air and our being safely caught up to meet him. The book of Revelation (3:10; 12:5) symbolically pictures this same event where the man child (or "male child," NIV) is caught up to God, which we will get to shortly. Another picture of this spiritual ark preparing is the bride of Christ making herself ready (Revelation 19:7).

Returning to Noah, Peter also speaks of him:

^{NAS} 1 Peter 3:19 in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now*¹⁹² in prison,

^{NAS} 1 Peter 3:20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, **were brought safely through *the* water**.

Jesus said that the last days would be just like in the days of Noah (Matthew 24:37), so we should now be building the true spiritual ark and the pattern that God has given us. This will provide our escape when the devil's "flood" of iniquity and lawlessness arrives. We will then be lifted up and "brought safely through" if we follow God's pattern and plan and do not become "disobedient," as many were in Noah's day.

We see from Peter's verses above that some who were righteous—although they were disobedient to God's high calling, did not believe Noah, and therefore died in the flood—still received good news of salvation from the Messiah. This is made clear in Ephesians 4:8, which says "he took captivity captive," a figure of speech meaning he delivered those righteous who died from the time of Adam and took them to heaven, which the Messiah was prophesied to do (Psalm 68:18).

191 "In the clouds" actually reads as "in clouds" in Greek, and it refers to large numbers of people going up in the air.

192 The italicizing of the word "now" shows it does not appear in the original Greek.

The Pattern and Plan Shown to Moses for the Dwelling Place of God

God shows His plan again in another picture in type when he directs Moses to construct the Tabernacle. This time His plan points forward to the spiritual tabernacle that the Messiah would build:

^{NAS} Exodus 25:8 “And let them construct a sanctuary for Me, **that I may dwell among them.**

^{NAS} Exodus 25:9 “According to all that I am going to show you, *as* the **pattern** of the tabernacle and the **pattern** of all its furniture, just so you shall construct *it*.

^{NAS} Exodus 25:40 “And see that you make *them* **after the pattern** for them, which was shown to you on the mountain.

^{NAS} Exodus 26:30 “Then you shall erect the tabernacle **according to its plan** which you have been shown in the mountain.

^{NAS} Exodus 25:22 “And **there I will meet with you**; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.

In verse 8 God told Moses to construct a sanctuary, “that I may dwell among them.” We see in the scriptures that Messiah is the true sanctuary and true tabernacle that God was pointing to (John 2:19–22), and that we—the believers who fulfill God’s pattern by having Christ formed in us—are also this tabernacle. Revelation 13:6 shows the Antichrist railing at this “tabernacle” of God (those who had been caught up to heaven):

^{NAS} Revelation 13:6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name **and His tabernacle, *that is,***¹⁹³ **those who dwell in heaven.**

193 The italicized words “*that is*” do not appear in the original Greek, so a more accurate reading of this passage is “to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, those who dwell in heaven.” In this case, “His tabernacle” consists of those people pictured in heaven in John’s vision of a future time yet to come.

The *UBS Greek-English Dictionary* gives several meanings for this Greek word that is translated into English as “tabernacle,” including “dwelling place,” “tabernacle,” and “house.”¹⁹⁴ Thus, the believers collectively are pictured as the “house” of God (1 Peter 2:5), while the body of the individual spirit-filled believer is called “the temple” because the spirit of God dwells within (1 Corinthians 6:19). This helps explain why, in the scripture above, the believers—“those who dwell in heaven”—are called His **tabernacle**.

The true tabernacle of God as pictured above (Revelation 13:6) consists of those who had previously been caught up to God, as we see in the scripture below (Revelation 12:5). These are God’s people who have fulfilled His plan and pattern, and are symbolically pictured here as a man child born from the woman:

^{KJV} Revelation 12:5 And she brought forth a **man child**, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was **caught up** unto God, and *to* his throne.

^{NAS} Revelation 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the **tabernacle** of God is among men, and **He shall dwell among them**, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them,

This man child represents the nation that is born out of this woman who represents the visible church (Revelation 12:1–5). This man child/nation was also spoken of by the prophet Isaiah in the scriptures that follow, but first let’s see how Isaiah sets up the context for these people who will serve as God’s dwelling place or house of rest:

^{NAS} Isaiah 66:1 Thus says the LORD, “Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. **Where then is a house** you could build for Me? **And where is a place that I may rest?**

Then God goes on to say where and with whom His resting place will be (i.e., those who tremble at His word):

^{NAS} Isaiah 66:2 “For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being,” declares the LORD. “But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.

194 *UBS Greek-English Dictionary*, pp. 163–164, s.v. “σκηνή.”

^{NAS} Isaiah 66:5 Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at His word: “Your brothers who hate you, who exclude you for My name’s sake, Have said, ‘Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy.’ But they will be put to shame.

^{KJV} Isaiah 66:7 Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a **man child**.

^{NAS} Isaiah 66:8 “**Who has heard such a thing?** Who has seen such things? Can a land be born in one day? **Can a nation be brought forth all at once?** As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons.

In Isaiah’s strange prophecy (“who has heard such a thing”), it was *before* the woman’s pain came that she brought forth this man child/nation. Then in the book of Revelation, we again see this man child (who is eventually caught away to God) being born of the woman¹⁹⁵ *before* her pain fully came (Revelation 12:5, 17).



Once again, those who build the true spiritual tabernacle according to God’s pattern will be taken up and away to safety, fulfilling what He said to Moses concerning His plan:

^{NAS} Exodus 25:8 “And let them construct a sanctuary for Me, **that I may dwell among them**.

And to repeat, these scriptures in Revelation show that we are fulfilling this plan given to Moses by becoming the true tabernacle of God before getting caught up to Him.

^{KJV} Revelation 12:5 And she brought forth a **man child**, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and **her child was caught up unto God**, and *to* his throne.

^{NAS} Revelation 13:6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name **and His tabernacle**, *that is*, **those who dwell in heaven**.

195 Here the woman represents the outward church. After the man child has been born and caught up, the remnant of her seed is attacked by the beast after the rapture (Revelation 12:17). See Course 12 for more on the beast.

Willing believers both small and great from all over the world will fulfill God’s plan and receive His love as they follow His pattern (including the new commandment to love one another, seen in John 13:34), just as Noah and Moses followed the pattern given to them. They will come into His image and likeness by becoming the promised spiritual bride:

^{NIV} Revelation 19:7 Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!
For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

This profound spiritual union is what God has always desired for Israel and for all those who love Him; consequently, this “nation” will be caught up to God and kept out of the hour of testing:

^{NAS} Revelation 3:8 ‘I know your deeds. Behold, **I have put before you an open door which no one can shut**, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

^{NAS} Revelation 3:9 ‘Behold, I will cause *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews,¹⁹⁶ and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

^{NAS} Revelation 3:10 ‘Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, **I also will keep you from the hour of testing**, that *hour* which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth.

The Plan and Pattern Given to David for the Dwelling Place of God

Now that we have seen God’s plan and pattern applied to Noah with the Ark and Moses with the Tabernacle, we will consider King David and the plan for building the Temple. Not only was David given a pattern of God’s plan for the Temple, but from Genesis he also understood God’s desire to make men in His likeness, and that motivated him to fulfill His plan.

^{NAS} 1 Chronicles 28:10 “Consider now, for the LORD has chosen you to build **a house** for the sanctuary; be courageous and act.”

196 Those who are truly Jewish in heart will not fight against what God is doing.

^{NAS} 1 Chronicles 28:11 Then David gave to his son Solomon the **plan** of the porch *of the temple*, its buildings, its storehouses, its upper rooms, its inner rooms, and the room for the mercy seat;

^{NAS} 1 Chronicles 28:12 and the **plan** of all that he had in mind, for the courts of the house of the LORD, and for all the surrounding rooms, for the storehouses of the house of God, and for the storehouses of the dedicated things;

^{KJV} 1 Chronicles 28:18 And for the altar of incense refined gold by weight; and gold for the **pattern** of the chariot of the cherubims, that spread out *their wings*, and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD.

David said that the Lord gave him understanding in all the details of this pattern:

^{NAS} 1 Chronicles 28:19 “All *this*,” said David, “the LORD made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, all the details of this pattern.”

Although David received these plans from God, later God said that David would not build the Temple but his son Solomon would. Many years after Solomon’s death, Isaiah, Zechariah, and Jeremiah were still talking about the coming son of David, the “Branch,” who would build the Temple. This showed that Solomon was not the *true* fulfillment of the promised son of David that was prophesied, nor therefore was Solomon’s Temple the building of which God spoke.

Then we see in Zechariah that the one whose name is “Branch” would build the temple, meaning the true *spiritual* temple (and soon we will see that we the believers are built into this spiritual house):

^{NAS} Zechariah 6:12 “Then say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and **He will build the temple of the LORD.**”

^{NAS} Zechariah 6:13 “Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.”

Jeremiah and Isaiah also mentioned this “Branch,” the chosen one from the House of David, in reference to the coming Messiah:

^{NAS} Jeremiah 23:5 “Behold, *the* days are coming,” declares the LORD, “When I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land.

^{NAS} Jeremiah 33:15 ‘In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth.

^{NAS} Isaiah 11:1 Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.

^{NAS} Isaiah 11:2 And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

^{NAS} Isaiah 4:2 In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth *will* be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel.

The temple that the Messiah (the Branch) would build would be a *spiritual* temple (“house”), as Peter says below. This temple would consist of living stones and would be built without hands (Daniel 2:34, 35; Mark 14:58). Peter shows the people offering up *spiritual* sacrifices in this spiritual house:

^{NAS} 1 Peter 2:5 you also, as **living stones**, are being built up as **a spiritual house**¹⁹⁷ for a holy priesthood, **to offer up spiritual sacrifices** acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Peter, quoting Psalm 118:22, continues picturing the Messiah as the very cornerstone of the spiritual temple:

197 The Jews often called the Temple the “house,” short for the “house of God.” In the Greek, “house” is used in 2 Chronicles 3:15–17 and Luke 11:51. In the King James Version it is translated into English as “temple,” thus showing it refers to this.

^{NAB} 1 Peter 2:7 Therefore, its value is for you who have faith, but for those without faith: “The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”

^{NAS} Hebrews 3:6 but Christ *was faithful* as a Son over His house **whose house we are**, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

David knew that it was God’s plan for us to be in His image and likeness and thus be a habitation and dwelling place of His presence; and for Him to fully dwell in us, we must grow into the pattern that is His likeness:

^{JPS} Psalm 17:15 As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, **when I awake, with Thy likeness.**

God desires to dwell in His people, to tabernacle in and among those He loves, and in turn we are His house and tabernacle. If we allow Him to form us into the pattern He gives, then He will fully dwell among and within us:

^{NAS} Psalm 132:13 For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation.

^{NAS} Psalm 132:14 “This is My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it.



We have seen that God’s will is that He finds habitation among His people. Another important aspect of His dwelling in and among His people lies in musical praise, as David understood:

^{KJV} Psalm 22:3 But thou *art* holy, *O thou* that **inhabitest the praises**¹⁹⁸ of Israel.

This soon-coming, last-days assembly will offer songs of praise to God. The spiritual worship offerings will not be “leavened” in the sense of “Jesus rock” music or soulful melodies, but they will be pure, very powerful spiritual “fire offerings” directly

198 The Hebrew word for “praises” can also refer to “songs of praise.”

to God, since He will be in the midst of these praises. In other words, these will be incredibly moving, captivating *spiritual* songs of praise that will sweep lovers of God up into spontaneous praise and worship. Just as the daily offerings (Tamid) in the Temple were accompanied by singing and musical instruments, so is the spiritual worship in God's spiritual house.

Those with musical gifts must be seeking God to receive the spiritual songs that will be coming. They must also use discernment, for Satan is pictured with his own music that he would like to inject into the congregation (Isaiah 14:11–13). God will be dwelling in His people in powerful ways, inhabiting their praises, and songs will be born of the spirit as musicians wait on God to receive them, as David did.

As Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well:

^{NAS} John 4:21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father.

^{NAS} John 4:22 "You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

^{NAS} John 4:23 "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers.

^{NAS} John 4:24 "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

David understood that God inhabits the praises of the people. The true worship that accompanies the coming spiritual music will help perfect the people into the pattern that God wants, fulfilling the picture of the spiritual bride.

Stephen Gives the Progression of God's Plan in Acts, but His Message and Life Were Cut Short

Stephen, one of the seven chosen (Acts 6:3, 5) and "a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit," speaks about God's pattern and plan just before he is martyred, saying:

^{NAS} Acts 7:44 "**Our fathers had the tabernacle** of testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed *him* to make it according to the **pattern** which he had seen.

^{NAS} Acts 7:47 “But it was Solomon who built a **house** for Him.

^{NAS} Acts 7:48 “However, the Most High does not dwell in *houses* made by *human* hands; as the prophet says:

^{NAS} Acts 7:49 ‘Heaven is My throne, And earth is the footstool of My feet; What kind of **house** will you build for Me?’ says the Lord; ‘Or what place is there for My repose?’

Below are the scriptures Stephen references from Isaiah—where God says with whom He will dwell—which we saw earlier when discussing the pattern and plan shown to Moses:

^{NAS} Isaiah 66:1 Thus says the LORD, “Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest?”

^{NAS} Isaiah 66:2 “For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being,” declares the LORD. “But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.

This will be the line of demarcation between those who are formed into the image and likeness of God and the Messiah, and those who refuse God’s *agape*¹⁹⁹ love. As with Noah’s example, some will be caught up and others will stay. Those who are contrite and humble and tremble at God’s word are those He will be able to lead into the new truths that the Holy Spirit will bring (John 16:13). God’s spirit, as well as those called by Him to minister, will correct and teach if any doctrinal error arises. These truths from God’s word will help perfect the assembly into the bride of Christ as she makes herself ready (Revelation 19:7).

God does not say He is looking to those who tremble at the word of a pastor, a rabbi, or a priest, yet count God’s own word as small in comparison. On the contrary, God is seeking those who will put His word first. All other authorities are to be extensions of God’s word, not of their own favorite doctrines or ideas.

Thus, the pastors, priests, and rabbis who refuse God’s truths will not be among those in the ark who are caught up; they will be left behind. However, God promises to bring forth those who will properly feed His people:

199 *Agape* is the Greek word often applied to the highest form of love—God’s love.

^{NAS} Jeremiah 3:15 “Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding.

The Logos of God Shows This Plan and Pattern

To the first-century Messianic Jews, the Greek word *logos* (usually translated as “word”) often referred to an important communication coming from God. In “Setting the Table 2” we examined many Greek words that took on new meanings as the power base shifted to Rome. *Logos* is another one we could add to that list; this Greek word came to be misunderstood in a very important passage of scripture.

In this section, we’ll first see how Roman theology viewed this word and then examine what it meant in the idiom of the first-century Messianic Jews. First-century Romans believed in gods and families of gods, and even their own caesars were considered to be gods. When Christianity became Rome’s religion, Jesus of course could be nothing less. But this history must be taken into account to understand how the meaning of certain Greek words changed over time.

What the Logos Came to Mean in Rome

Since Emperor Constantine’s time, many have taught that the *logos* was actually Jesus as a pre-existent being who was himself God, and who was in the beginning with God. This idea mostly comes from misinterpreting the *logos* in the Gospel of John, translated as “Word” below:

^{NAS} John 1:1 In the beginning was the **Word**, and the **Word** was with God, and **the Word was God**.

^{NAS} John 1:2 **He was in the beginning with God**.

And here are two versions of verse 3:

^{KJV} John 1:3 **All things were made by him**; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

^{NAS} John 1:3 **All things came into being by Him**, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Then we come down to verse 14:

^{NAS} John 1:14 And the **Word became flesh, and dwelt among us,** and we beheld His glory, glory as of **the only begotten from the Father,** full of grace and truth.

When we examine these scriptures outside of the Jewish idioms and only through the Roman concepts handed down, it's easy to see that an incorrect belief such as the following could arise: Since Jesus was the Word (*logos* verse 14), and the Word was God (verse 1), and the Word was in the beginning with God (verse 2), and made all things (verse 3), therefore Jesus was mistakenly thought to be a pre-existent God (called *logos*) who made all things. To add to this confusion, the Jewish Mary was also exalted by Rome, for she had given birth to this pre-existent God and therefore was regarded as the Mother of God.

This misunderstanding of what the *logos* was gave rise to faulty translations of other scriptures that also *appear* to say things along this same line—that Jesus made the worlds and was the firstborn of all creation as a pre-existing God:

^{KJV} Hebrews 1:2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, **by whom also he made the worlds;**

^{DBY} Colossians 1:15 who is image of the invisible God, **firstborn of all creation;**

Logos to the First-Century Messianic Jews

During the time of Jesus, Greek was the most commonly spoken language. Alexander the Great (ca. 356–323 BC), the king of Macedon (ancient northern Greece), had conquered the known world about 300 years earlier, and thus Greek became the dominant language throughout his empire. The first-century Jewish historian Josephus wrote in Greek, as did his contemporary, the Jewish biblical philosopher Philo. All the original New Testament scriptures were written in Greek. Even the holy gathering places of the Jews, located throughout Israel and among the nations, were called by a Greek name (*sunagogais*, or later “synagogues” in English) rather than a Hebrew or Aramaic name. The common Bible in use among the Jews was the Greek Septuagint, and the majority of Old Testament scripture quotes in the New Testament came from it, and not from the original Hebrew scriptures.

So to understand what John meant, we must accept how Jews used this word *logos* for hundreds of years before he wrote these scriptures. Both before and during

the time of Jesus, Jews were familiar with *logos* (λόγος) because it was used often in the Septuagint (the Greek below) when the Prophets would bring a “word” from the Lord:

^{NAS} Jeremiah 13:8 Then the **word** of the LORD came to me, saying,

^{LXT} Jeremiah 13:8 καὶ ἐγενήθη **λόγος** κυρίου πρὸς με λέγων

^{NAS} Jeremiah 13:9a “Thus says the LORD ...

So in this scripture above, Jeremiah says “the word [*logos* in the Septuagint] of the LORD came to me, saying”; then in the next verse he speaks forth what God wanted to express, starting with, “Thus says the Lord ...”.

When first-century Jews read in Ezekiel of the dry bones connecting together and coming alive because of the “word” of the Lord, they would have seen this same word for *logos* in their Greek scriptures:

^{NAS} Ezekiel 37:4 Again He said to me, “Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the **word** of the LORD.’

^{NAS} Ezekiel 37:5 “**Thus says the Lord God** to these bones, ‘Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life.

You will see this same wording over and over in the Prophets:

^{NAS} Jeremiah 24:4 Then the **word** of the LORD came to me, saying,

^{LXT} Jeremiah 24:4 καὶ ἐγένετο **λόγος** κυρίου πρὸς με λέγων

^{NAS} Jeremiah 24:5a “Thus says the LORD God of Israel ...

When a *logos* came from “the LORD,” it was “saying” that something was coming from God, be it a truth, a warning, or something else. It was God expressing Himself; thus the word (*logos*) was pictured figuratively as speaking for God, “saying” this or that. Naturally, in the above scripture, Jeremiah was not saying, “The pre-existing Son of God, Jesus, came to me saying ...”.

Therefore when the Jewish scripture writer John uses this word *logos*, we must not read this kind of interpretation into the text. Instead we must look at the actual meaning of the Greek word *logos* and see how it was understood within the Jewish idiom of John’s day.



Within the Jewish idiom, *logos* often referred to *an inward thought and an outward expression*. The *BDAG Greek-English Lexicon* definition for it covers a few pages, but this is the first and clearest definition that they give:

λόγος a communication whereby the mind finds expression, *word*²⁰⁰

So the *logos* in John was God's inward thought that would be outwardly expressed. It was God's *plan and pattern* for His people, just as we saw was *in the beginning* in Genesis 1:26 and right on through Noah, Moses, David, and the Messiah.

^{NAS} John 1:1 In the beginning was the **Word**, and the **Word** was with God, and **the Word was God**.

The English translations capitalize “Word” because they mostly see it as referring to Jesus as the pre-existent God, but John himself does not capitalize it. The proper way to interpret this verse is that God's plan and pattern (*logos*) was in the beginning with God, and it “was God” in the sense that the *logos* was God Himself expressed. The fulfillment of God's plan and pattern for man is to have man in His image and likeness, as we saw at the beginning of this Course concerning Genesis.

When the Messiah was born, he began to grow into God's image and likeness:

^{NIV} Luke 2:52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

As he grew older, he fulfilled God's pattern to such a degree that he became the perfect expression of God's nature:

^{NAS} Hebrews 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and **the exact representation of His nature**, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;

^{NAS} Colossians 1:15 And He is **the image of the invisible God**, the **first-born** of all creation.

200 Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (BDAG)*, 3rd ed., pp. 598–601.

Again, this verse above does not mean that Jesus was “first born” as a pre-existent God before all creation; it rather means that he is the firstborn son in the Jewish sense of having inherited the position of authority handed down by the Father. He is also the firstborn of the new spiritual creation that God had in mind, and he is called the “first born out of the dead” (Revelation 1:5, YLT), for his Resurrection opened the door through which others may escape death. He is also the firstborn in the sense of being the first²⁰¹ man born who came into God’s exact image and likeness.

The Messiah was not *literally* in the beginning with God, but he was in God’s mind, the central focus of His plan, and the one who would fulfill His plan and pattern. So here is another look at what John meant from within the Jewish idioms and understandings of his day:

^{NAS} John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

^{NAS} John 1:2 He was in the beginning with God.

The Greek word οὗτος, translated as “He” in the above verse, is usually translated as “this.” The original Greek here means “this was in the beginning.” This *logos*, this thought and plan was in God’s mind from the very beginning. While *logos* here initially refers to God’s inward thought and outward expression, as John continues toward verse 14, the focus slowly changes to the one who fulfills this *logos*—the Messiah.

^{NAS} John 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

All the things God created were made with the Messiah and God’s plan of redemption in mind. Since the *logos* was not another God, we can see John’s real meaning in these scriptures—that the *logos* is another way of showing God’s plan and pattern for His people. So John’s Gospel must be interpreted correctly in this context:

^{KJV} John 1:3 **All things were made by him;** and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Notice how the King James Version translated this as “All things were made by him,” since many believed that the *logos* was the “pre-existent” Christ (Messiah) who made

201 Some may consider Adam to be the first son (Genesis 1:26–7), but he was not “born” and although he was in God’s image, the scripture does not say he came into God’s likeness.

all things. But the Greek word above for “by” is *dia*, which can also mean “through” or “with.” In other words, “all things were made” **with** the *logos*—God’s plan—in mind.

As the future perfect expression of His *logos*, the Messiah was in God’s mind from the beginning. The sun, moon, twelve constellations, seven days of creation, Adam, then Eve coming from his side, and the marriage relationship were all made with Christ and God’s plan for mankind *in mind*. So were all things that were built on earth under God’s direction—the Ark, Tabernacle, Temple, Showbread, etc. As the second half of John 1:3 says, “without him was not any thing made that was made,” meaning that the Messiah and God’s plan were in His mind when God spoke and created all these things (Genesis 1:1; 2:4; Hebrews 1:2; 11:3).



This is the proper way to understand the following scripture as well:

^{NAS} Hebrews 1:2 in these last days has **spoken to us in His Son**, whom He appointed heir of all things, **through whom also He made the world.**

The Greek word translated into English as “world” is actually plural and is more accurately translated as “ages.” And “through” is the Greek word *dia*, which here refers to God’s plan *through* Christ—namely that the ages of mankind were set forth by God with a view to His plan through Christ to bring the people into His likeness. After all, God’s son did not yet exist back in Genesis since the Messiah would be born many years later, so he could not have made the “worlds.”

It was God doing the speaking and God who created everything in Genesis, and the Jews understood this. It was only in Rome where these idioms were misunderstood, giving rise to the concept of Jesus rolling up balls of dirt to make the planets. The scripture states irrevocably that God spoke and it was He who made the heavens:

^{NAS} Genesis 1:1 In the beginning **God created** the heavens and the earth.

^{NAS} Psalm 33:6 By the word of the LORD²⁰² the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host.

202 “LORD,” when spelled in capital letters, is “YAHWEH” in Hebrew.

When the Messiah came, this *logos* took on its fullest expression because in Christ we see the clearest example of God's pattern and plan. John pointed this out in the verse we saw earlier, showing that Christ was this Word (*logos*) of God being expressed:

^{NAS} John 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

God and scripture writers alike often speak figuratively in the Bible. Some theologians who came later jumped to the conclusion that John 1:1–3 was speaking of a second or third God who formed part of the one God. Jewish people, however, had always known that only one God existed, and He was not divided into halves or thirds.

As Isaiah wrote:

^{NAS} Isaiah 44:6 “Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last, And **there is no God besides Me.**

^{NAS} Isaiah 44:8 ‘Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are My witnesses. **Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any *other* Rock? I know of none.**’”

God did not ask, “Is there any God besides *us*?” Instead He asked if there was any God “besides Me” and further emphasized this by saying “I know of none,” clearly proclaiming that He Himself is the only God. God did not answer Isaiah saying, “the Messiah (Jesus) is another God that I know,” because no Messiah existed until God placed the seed in the virgin and she gave birth, as was prophesied by Isaiah (7:14).

When God revealed Himself to Moses, He said “I AM”; He did not say “We are.” When David, the king of Israel, spoke of the “Holy Spirit” in the verse below, he did not mean that the Holy Spirit was another God, for the Jews knew definitively that only one God existed.

^{NAS} Psalm 51:11 Do not cast me away from Thy presence, And **do not take Thy Holy Spirit from me.**

The Jews understood the Holy Spirit (*Ruach HaKodesh* in Hebrew) was the one true God, who is holy and who is spirit. They never dreamed that the Holy Spirit was a second God or a third of God. They understood this verse from Psalms to be speaking of God's presence, of His spirit dwelling with David.



Jesus also spoke of his heavenly Father as the only true God:

^{NAS} John 17:3 “And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, **the only true God**, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.

It is true that the Messiah was to be called “Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23), and that this Hebrew name means “God with us.” But when someone asks which God was “with us,” the answer is that, since there is only one God, it was He who was with us and He who was dwelling in Christ, as the scriptures say.

^{NAS} 2 Corinthians 5:19 namely, that **God was in Christ** reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

When people speak of the “Deity of Christ,” this must also be qualified. Yes, God was dwelling in Christ, but this did not make Christ a second or third Deity; rather, it fulfilled the above scripture of God being “in Christ.”

God stated unequivocally that there was no other God besides Him, and the scriptures also clearly state that Jesus was a man:

^{NIV} 1 Timothy 2:5 For **there is one God** and **one mediator** between God and men, **the man Christ Jesus**,

You cannot be a man and also be a God, because only one God exists, and He is not a man:

^{NIV} Numbers 23:19 **God is not a man**, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

No man ever existed—*except* for the Messiah—who was the perfect expression of God. This is why the prophet Isaiah pictured the Messiah in such a close position to God that his *name* would be called “Mighty God” and “Eternal Father”:

^{NAS} Isaiah 9:6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And **His name will be called** Wonderful Counselor, **Mighty God, Eternal Father**, Prince of Peace.

Notice it says that “His **name** will be called” these things. When Moses saw the calling of God upon Joshua—who would lead the Jews into the Promised Land—he added part of God’s name (Yahweh) to Oshea, making it Yah-Oshea (Numbers 13:16). In English, we call this name “Joshua,” but in Hebrew and Greek it was the very same name that Jesus had. Of course, this did not mean that Joshua became another God, but only that he was worthy to bear God’s name.

Both Isaiah 9:6 (above) and Isaiah 7:14 (which says the Messiah’s name would be Immanuel) state basically the same thing, but in a greater measure with the Messiah. The Messiah would have the one true God dwelling within him; he would be the true tabernacle/temple of God (John 2:19–21), and in this sense he would literally be “God with us.”

God Speaks Through the Logos

The Israelites understood that the *logos* of God was *an aspect* of God being expressed, not a separate, pre-existent being. When I searched for the phrase “Thus says the Lord,” it appeared about 400 times as spoken by the prophets. However, the Messiah never once uses this phrase, for when God spoke through the Messiah, He spoke in the first person. The Messiah so perfectly yielded to his Father that God would often speak through him directly:

^{NAS} Hebrews 1:2a in these last days has spoken to us **in His Son**,

Jesus said that the words he spoke were not just from himself, but often those his Father was speaking through him:

^{DBY} John 14:10 Believest thou not that I *am* in the Father, and that the Father is in me? **The words which I speak to you I do not speak from myself; but the Father who abides in me**, he does the works.

^{NAS} John 14:24 “He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and **the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s** who sent Me.

One example of God speaking through His Son is when Jesus saw the multitude coming with swords and clubs to arrest him, and said to them, “I AM.” Upon hearing this, the people fell backward to the ground, because God was anointing him and speaking through him in power:

^{NAB} John 18:6 When he said to them, “I AM,” they turned away and fell to the ground.

The Greek wording says they went backward and fell to the ground. Most translations say “I am **he**,” but “he” does not exist here in the original Greek. God was speaking in the first person through Christ, just as He did when He spoke to Moses out of the fiery bush, saying “I AM” hath sent me (Exodus 3:14).

Another example of God speaking through Christ is found in John 2:19, which reads “Destroy this temple and in three days **I** will raise it up.” According to a following scripture (2:21), these words concerned his earthly body and not the natural Temple as some thought. These words were not Jesus speaking but his Father within him, for later the scripture says that God raised him from the dead, and Jesus of course did not raise himself (Acts 10:40).

God has always wanted to reveal Himself, His love, and His nature to His people, and Christ is the fullness of that expression; he is the perfect expression of this *logos*. The Messiah fully yielded to his Father and spoke the words that God gave him (John 14:10). In all the things that the Messiah said and did, we see God’s heart and His nature expressed. This is how he “declared” the Father:

^{KJV} John 1:18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath **declared**²⁰³ *him*.

The Logos Is the Plan, the Messiah Is the Expression and Pattern

We’ve seen that the Messiah was the firstborn to fulfill God’s plan and pattern. Yet God desires to bring many into this same pattern, image, and likeness:

^{NIV} Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined **to be conformed to the likeness of his Son**, that he might be the **firstborn among many brothers**.

We were created in God’s image and were to then grow into His likeness. When Adam sinned, some of that image and likeness fell short for future generations, but God’s plan was to restore us through the Messiah and thus to redeem us back to Himself.

In the beginning of this Course, we considered whether God was speaking to Christ prophetically in Genesis 1:26 (“Let us make man in our image” ...). This

203 The Greek word ἐξηγήσατο, translated as “declared,” means “to reveal or explain, or make known.”

would fit with John saying that the *logos* was in the beginning with God (John 1:1–3), because God’s inward thought and then His outward expression are what Genesis chapter 1 is all about. And this *logos* was fulfilled in Christ when the *logos* became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14).

When we come into this image and likeness that God desires, we will be a habitation for God. His presence will abide within us, just as the “presence breads” (Showbread) pointed to. This is the true tabernacle that John speaks of—God dwelling in and among His people. It is the people who are caught up to heaven (Revelation 3:10, 12:5, 13:6, 21:3) and who escape the hour of tribulation; they are the true tabernacle of God.

It is probably normal to look at this high calling that God has for us, then examine ourselves and exclaim, “How can we possibly get there?” We must always remember that God’s love and mercy will encourage us along the way:

^{NAS} Proverbs 24:16a For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again,

^{NAS} Psalm 103:11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His loving kindness toward those who fear Him.

^{NAS} Psalm 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

^{NAS} Psalm 103:13 Just as a father has compassion on *his* children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.

^{NAS} Psalm 103:14 For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are *but* dust.

The spiritual body of Christ will be truly merciful toward all those who have fallen short and still have weaknesses—in other words to all who are not perfected yet—for that is God’s heart.

One verse used to bring me a lot of comfort when I was a new believer. Having lived my first 22 years apart from God and then afterward as a believer, the road ahead seemed difficult. There was a scripture that spoke of a bruised reed, and while I didn’t know what a bruised reed was, I knew that I was one:

^{NAS} Isaiah 42:3a “A bruised reed He will not break, And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish;

We must remember that, as we stay connected to the spiritual body of Christ and yield to all God brings, He will form us into His image and likeness as the spiritual bride. God has promised to raise up shepherds having His heart, and they will bring the true teaching from God's word that will help us. This support, along with God's spirit and His love in and through the members of the spiritual body, will grow us into the spiritual habitation that He desires. He has given us precious promises that we must hold on to and never let go:

^{NAS} 2 Peter 1:4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that **by them you might become partakers of *the* divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

We must not allow our focus to be only on ourselves or only on how we are doing, but to look to the Messiah as the author and he who perfects:

^{NAS} Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

^{NAS} Hebrews 12:2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, **the author and perfecter** of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

We must also realize that we will not be perfected overnight, but it will be a process from glory to glory:

^{NAS} 2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image **from glory to glory**, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

As someone once said concerning the above verse, the "glory" part is what we like, but it is the "to" period that can be tough.

As we look to Christ as "the author and finisher" (KJV Hebrews 12:2) and seek to understand God's word, yielding as God's spirit leads, His *agape* love will perfect us into the bride:

^{NAS} 1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, **when He appears, we shall be like Him**, because we shall see Him just as He is.

^{NIV} Galatians 4:19 My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth **until Christ is formed in you**,

^{NAS} Ephesians 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, **to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ**.

The Messiah was the image and likeness of God, and while we individually will never fully be his equal, as a group of believers we shall be like him, fulfilling God's pattern and plan.