

## #1 PEOPLE OF GOD

A. In [Matthew 16](#), Jesus, in response to Peter's confession of faith, promised to build His church.

1. Although the church was established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, & Peter played a leading role in that event ([Acts 2:47](#)), he did not refer to the people of God by the term "church" in his epistles.

2. He did however use several other terms to refer to the church (cf. [1 Pet 1:1-2](#)), in fact he actually called them "the people of God" ([1 Pet 2:9-10](#)).

### I. EVERY PERSON BELONGS TO GOD IN A SENSE

A. God made mankind in His image ([Gen 1:26-28](#)).

1. We also believe that God created everything & every person to serve a purpose (cf. [Psa 8](#)).

a. I'm not talking about the secular concepts of individual predestination, fate, or destiny.

b. But that God created man to serve His purpose, & that we are not left in doubt as to that purpose ([Ecc 12:13-14](#)).

2. Those who think that man has evolved from organic substances will live a brief & futile existence & then die without hope.

3. Many will grope through life in darkness, refusing the light of God's knowledge & truth, because they simply will not acknowledge Him.

B. But God is not a human theory.

1. **Jesus** was the greatest manifestation on this earth that God is the ever-present Father ([Matt 11:27](#); [John 1:18](#); [14:9](#); [Col 1:15](#); [Heb 1:1-3](#)). **The Holy Spirit** was the greatest manifestation on this earth that God desires that man know His will ([John 14:25-26](#); [15:26-27](#); [16:13](#); [1 Cor 2:9-13](#)).

[So what is God's purpose? Did He create all things on a mere whim or by sudden impulse? Or does He have a great overriding purpose?]

## II. GOD'S PURPOSE FOR US

A. **The Athenians** were great “god-servers”.

1. They *built* beautiful ornate temples, *dedicated* finely crafted statues & *gave* their so-called gods many lavish gifts, *but they failed* to understand what God the Creator wants from His creatures, & so Paul said to them...

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**Acts 17:24-25** – **God**, who made the world & everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven & earth, **does not** dwell in temples made with hands. **Nor is He** worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, & all things. **So what does God want from man?**

**Acts 17:26-27** – [God] made from one blood every nation of men...**so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him & find Him**, though He is not far from each one of us

**Heb 11:6** – But without faith (**Rom 10:17**) it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that **He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him**.

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1. Now then, even though God is all-sufficient, He still wants something from man [us]; He didn't create a need for Himself, He created a purpose? What is it?

2. To answer that let's go to Romans 1, where Paul described the sinfulness of man to show that God is just to condemn all mankind.

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**Rom 1:21-22** – because, **although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, & their foolish hearts were darkened.** 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools

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- a. The opposite of these things God DID NOT want man to do, are the very things God DID want them to do: **To** “glorify Him as God”. **To** be “thankful” to Him. **To** have His will “in their thoughts”. **To** fill their “hearts” with light (truth; **Psa 119:130**).

[SO God has always wanted a people who will *seek* Him by faith (**Acts 17**), *worship* Him as the Creator, & *recognize* their total dependence upon Him (**Rom 1**) – that's God's purpose for man! In addition to that point...]

B. **God's first words** on the sixth day of creation, "*Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness*" ([Gen1:26](#)).

1. That doesn't refer to man's physical appearance; God is Spirit ([John 4:24](#)), & spirit is a "form" that is not visible to us at this time ([Deut 4:12-19](#); [1 Tim 6:16](#)).
2. "The image of God" refers to man's inner being; our spiritual nature: will, intellect & emotion — *our free moral agency*; we are self conscious & self controlling beings.
3. Since that is what God created us to be, then what does He want us to do with the power of self-control?

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**1 John 4:7-8** – *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; & everyone who loves is born of God & knows God.* 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

**1 John 4:9-10** – In this *the love of God was manifested toward us*, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that *He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

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4. So beyond seeking Him in faith, to worshipping Him as the Creator, & recognizing our dependence on Him...is His purpose for us that [we] the objects of His love be capable, on our own, of returning that love to Him first & secondarily to others ([Matt 22:36-40](#)). Do You!?
5. But to do that, we have to have the ability to make those choices, the freedom to either keep His commandments or to not obey Him.

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**1 John 2:3-5** – Now *by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.* 4 He who says, "I know Him," & does not keep His commandments, is a liar, & the truth is not in him. 5 But *whoever keeps His word*, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

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[In summary, GOD WANTED A PEOPLE who have the power of choice, the ability to choose – that's the kind of people He made.

But God's purpose in giving us that power of choice was so that we might seek Him in faith, worship Him as the Creator, recognize our dependence on Him & reciprocate the love He has shown us, in sending His Son into the world that we might live through Him.

I know that we all understand the free moral nature of man, but a greater part of this world does not accept it.

So I want to conclude this lesson by driving home the fact that God's purpose for us can be seen in the way He made us.]

### III. GOD'S PURPOSE DETERMINES OUR NATURE

A. **When God made** man in His image & gave him commands to obey, God was demonstrating to the human race from the very beginning that men & women could act independent of His power.

1. Theologians tell us that free-will compromises the sovereignty of God — man can't "No" to God.
  - a. They would have us believe that God has already selected those whom He will save, & that our actions have nothing to do with His decision.

b. BUT the sovereignty of God WILL BE vindicated on the Day of Judgment (**2 Cor 5:10**) – no one will ever again say "No" to God.

B. **So how can we know** that man has the power of choice, the power over his eternal destiny, & that we're not just marionettes of a Grand Puppeteer?

1. **FIRST**, because God Himself has the power of choice & we're made in His image.

a. He "relented" or repented of His desire to destroy the idolatrous Israelites (**Exo 32:7-14**).

2. **SECONDLY**, because God show no partiality to His human creation – He treats all men on the basis of their attitudes & action toward Him & His law (**Deut 10:17; Ezek 18:19-24; Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9**).

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**Acts 10:34-35** – In truth I perceive that *God shows no partiality*. But in every nation *he who fears Him & works righteousness is accepted by Him*.

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- a. So God created people who can of their own accord choose to love, honor & obey Him; He has no interest in spending eternity with puppets.

C. **Since our Maker** gave us a free will; what do we do with it?

1. We've mentioned several things: seek Him in faith, worship Him as the Creator, recognize our dependence on Him & reciprocate His love.
2. Paul summed that by saying, "*whatever you do* [whatever lawful thing you do], *do all to the glory of God*" (1 Cor 10:31; cf. Col 3:17).

[Actually, what God wants us to do with our free will, our moral self, is to give it back to Him in full & unfettered submission & obedience (Matt 16:24).]

## CLOSING

A. **The People of God** are of a certain kind or quality.

1. They are not those who merely claim to be His people.
2. They are not of any particular race or nationality.
3. They are not members of any party or religious denomination, though they are part of a group that can be identified.
4. They are like those to whom Peter wrote to in the first century (2 Pet 1:4, 10).

B. **The Bible reveals** the unfolding of God's eternal plan, & it identifies the People of God who have willingly come under the shelter of God plan.

1. In future lessons we will trace the unfolding of His plan for the development of His people.

The shelter of God's plan is Jesus Christ.

In a relationship to Jesus Christ our sins can be forgiven, we can become one of God's people, & live with the great promise of an eternal home in heaven.

On the condition of wholehearted obedient faith in the gospel, God has provided an open door to escape His approaching wrath against those who do not obey Him.

Will we choose the shelter of God? Or will we choose to stand under the shanty of the evil one, wherein are the futile & empty promises of the world?

The Judgment Day, the first Day of Eternity, will bring us face to face with the choice we make.

If you're here today as one who needs to come under the shelter of the God's plan, we invite you to come forward confessing your faith in Him, repenting of a life in sin, and being buried with Him in baptism. And as you die to sin, He will raise you up to live in hope of life everlasting.

Adapted from: *People of God: A Study of the Church* – by Robert F. Turner.

#### **GOD'S PLAN FOR OUR SALVATION:**

**Hear the gospel of Jesus Christ; read it in your Bible:** Acts 2; 3; 13; 17; Rom 10:17

**Believe Jesus to be Lord and Christ, the Son of God and Savior:** Acts 2:36; John 3:16; 8:24; 20:30-31; Acts 4:12; Titus 1:4

**Repent of your sins:** Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 1 John 3:4

**Confess your faith in Jesus Christ:** Matt 10:32-33; Acts 8:37; Rom 10:9-10

**Be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins:** Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:27; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet 3:21

**Be obedient to the Lord, He will be your Judge:** Titus 2:11-12; Heb 5:9; 2 John 9; Rev 2:10; John 12:48