

Preface

We have served in the country of Turkey since November 2003. The inclination to write this book has weighed upon us for several years; finally the opportunity was granted us during periods of radical *lockdown* in this country during the COVID-19 Pandemic, in February of 2020. This book is not unique, in the sense that one will find new information about God's word within its pages, we have simply endeavored to *unfold and express* God's word from a wide-angle perspective that presents his purposes and plans most clearly, namely, his original plan, his salvation plan, and his restoration plan. Our hope is that the readers of this book will discover, through the uncovering of these plans, what tremendous love God has for them and the adventure he has determined for every one of his children—both in this present life and throughout eternity. We most deeply desire that this realization would, in turn, ignite a passionate love and adoration for our God which is made manifest for all the observing world to see in their newly changed lives.

There are two main reasons which motivated us to write the book. The primary reason was to address a prevailing misconception that we have discovered exists among the Turkish Christians to whom we minister concerning the purpose of man; which is also a common misunderstanding throughout all Christendom. The error is derived from the fact that the *main objective* of every major religion in the world (Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, among others) is to obtain salvation (or gain a greater state of existence) and enter into paradise. That is not, however, the *main objective* of Christianity, which is to obtain a relationship with God through the finished work of Messiah, entering into a new life in him that matures to rightly reflect God's image in the world. The resulting problem with this misunderstanding is that it *thoroughly* affects the believer's sanctification, or, what we call the *Christian walk*, that is, the daily life of the child of God consisting of the *study* and *application* of God's word by which he is being transformed into the image of Messiah. Therefore, those who believe that assurance of entrance into heaven is the main objective in life will completely miss the true understanding of what life is all about and why God created them in the first place. *Salvation is an awakening*, a resurrection from spiritual death, that *must* occur in order for a person to fulfill his true purpose in life—it is not the main objective, but rather, a *first step*. Salvation for the Christian is something that was necessary for God to accomplish *in order for man to fulfill all that he was created to be* (as revealed in God's original plan). Without this awakening or quickening, man would remain spiritually dead in his sins and never be able to fulfill God's desire for his life. A true Christian will indeed enter into eternity to remain in the presence of God in paradise, *but that reality is independent of our purpose in life at the present time*—we exist to glorify and find our pleasure in God in the present through our assigned commission and service. When we study the big picture of God's word and comprehend the plans that God is meticulously executing within his creation, our designed purpose, responsibilities, and privileges as God's children become *vividly evident*.

The second reason we wrote this book was to provide, unfold, delineate, and clarify the basic understanding of God's revealed plans for his creation, which we refer to as the *big picture*, or *structure* of the Bible. We have found that most believers truly struggle to comprehend this tremendous picture which, when viewed in proper perspective, most clearly reveals God's love toward mankind. We wrote this book for new Christians, as well as for God's children who have followed the Lord for perhaps many years, but never obtained a comprehensive grasp of the big picture of scripture. It really is quite difficult to see the structure of the Bible from reading it through only once or twice, or by merely attending a general Bible study class, or listening to educational Bible podcasts, or even by regularly attending church worship services. It is indeed very unfortunate that many Christians in the world struggle with some of the most basic questions of life even though they have been united with the Lord for many years. How is this even possible? One answer to that question may be, a lack of spiritual maturity; there are *carnal* Christians in the world (1 Cor. 3:1–4). But there is another answer to this question that we cover in detail in chapter 1. Typically when a person hears the gospel message and comes to faith, he has only learned a limited amount of biblical information, and reasonably so, for the gospel message is but a small fraction of God's tremendous plans. From the time of a person's salvation, when he is young in the Lord, it would be *very* beneficial for him as a new believer to read through the Bible as many times as possible over the ensuing years while endeavoring to understand the epic revelation of God's heart and plans. We encourage our new Turkish converts to read through the Bible three or four times their first year. Unfortunately, this is not the usual trajectory of most new Christians. Most will immediately enter into the mid-stream of an ongoing Bible study before ever understanding the big picture, and before any preparatory work at all, they are instantly studying some of the difficult doctrines that are tied up in the *details* of God's word. Thus, the magnificent, overall message that God has provided for us becomes lost among this forest of profoundly difficult and detailed information. Consequently, many new believers become extremely confused and frustrated about a great many biblical truths and can remain in a state of disorientation for many years. With this in mind, *this book was designed to assist the student of the Bible to first understand, the framework of God's message to man; thereby, providing a means to make sense of the various writings, genres, and details of the Bible.*

God truly has extraordinary purposes and plans that are revealed in the fullness of his word. The Bible is a compilation of historic, present day, and future knowledge concerning God's original plan for mankind which was corrupted by sin, his salvation plan that triumphed over sin, and his restoration plan that is steadily returning creation to his original genesis—God's determined purposes and plans cannot be thwarted! The Psalmist wrote, “The plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people he chose for his inheritance.” (Ps. 33:11–12). What is a Christian's part to play in God's plan? God's desire is for his children to thoroughly study, accurately understand, and aptly *apply* his word. In Ephesians 5 the Apostle Paul wrote, “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light *finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.*” (Eph. 5:8, 10 – Emphasis added) In Colossians 1 he also wrote, “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may *be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God*” (Col. 1:9–10 – Emphasis added).

Additionally, in 2 Timothy he wrote, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, *rightly dividing the word of truth*” (2 Tim. 2:15 – Emphasis added). Furthermore, God said in Hebrews 5, “For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who *by reason of use* have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:13–14 – Emphasis added). Concerning this topic of hearing *and doing* God's word, Jesus offered this example,

[EXT]Whoever hears these sayings of Mine, *and does them*, I will liken him to a *wise man* who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, *and does not do them*, will be like a *foolish man* who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall (Matt. 7:24–27 – Emphasis added).**[EXT]**

These verses command that we not only know God's word, but that we identify areas of our lives that fall short of his will, and rectify our short-comings in obedience to him. Generally, it is not too difficult for us to identify problems in our lives, the challenging part is setting ourselves in a positive direction and taking the actual steps necessary to correct these troubling areas we clearly see. A person once facetiously stated, “I am more than willing to make some lifestyle changes as long as I don't have to do anything different!” Unfortunately, this seems to be the prevailing attitude of most people in the world, but it should never be the position of any of God's children. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matt. 12:34). May our confidence of the truth of God's revealed word and the fullness of his love and provision for us be our continual motivation to learn from, and be yielding to, the guidance of our Lord.

Through the uncovering of God's plans in his word, the reader of our book will discover the tremendous love and exhilarating adventure that God has determined for every one of his children, both in this present life and in eternity! Therefore, if our book is able to illuminate and clarify for the reader the big picture of God's word, the structure of the Bible, distinctly revealing his wonderful purposes and plans, thus bringing a person into a deeper sense of love and adoration of our Lord and King, we will have abundantly fulfilled our desire for this endeavor.