

Session 1: Before the Foundation of the World

I. What Is the Purpose and Meaning of Life?

- a) For as long as humans have been on earth, we have wondered, “Who are we and why are we here?”, “What is life all about?”, “What is the purpose of existence?”, “What is the meaning of life?”, and “What are we living for?”.
- b) Throughout history, these questions have resulted in a wide range of competing answers and arguments, from scientific theories to philosophical, theological, and spiritual explanations. There have been many proposed answers from various cultures, ideological perspectives, and worldviews. The search for life’s meaning has produced much speculation for over six-thousand years as many have studied the origins of good and evil, the free will of man, the soul, consciousness, happiness, social ties, values, purpose, ethics, the existence of God, and the afterlife.
- c) From a scientific and philosophical perspective, the meaning of life typically involves having a purpose, acquiring knowledge, taking personal responsibility, achieving worthwhile goals, discovering your unique significance, and finding pleasure. Typical mantras go something like this: “Discover who you are, what life demands of you, and how you can play a significant role in life”; “You and you alone are responsible for what kind of life you want to live and what constitutes significant and worthwhile life goals”; “You will enjoy a deep sense of significance and satisfaction only when you have exercised your responsibility for self-determination and actively pursue a worthy life goal.”
- d) From a religious perspective, various faiths around the world have also attempted to define the meaning of life. Judaism, for example, typically views the meaning of life as a preparation for the world to come, when the Messiah comes and makes Israel the praise of the earth. Christianity, with its roots in Judaism, shares much in common with this Judaistic perspective, but in addition, views life’s purpose as gaining salvation by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Life’s ultimate purpose in Islam is serving Allah through the five pillars of the faith and bringing the world into submission to Allah. Other religions view charity, knowledge, self-depravation, and social justice as life’s ultimate meaning.
- e) In today’s culture, in an attempt to find life’s ultimate meaning, we’re told to chase your dreams; to build a legacy that will outlast you; to stand for something and make a difference; to become the person you’ve always wanted to be; to become the best version of yourself; to seek happiness and pleasure; to be a truly authentic human being; to fulfill your destiny; to live as long as possible; to know as much as possible about as many things as possible; to avoid suffering and pain at all costs; to leave the world a better place than you found it; to give more than you take; to end suffering and create equality; to challenge oppression and bring justice; to be generous and distribute wealth to the least; to be honorable, responsible, and peace-loving; to accept, tolerate, and forgive human flaws; and to help as many people as possible have a better life.
- f) When you’re growing up as a kid, life’s ultimate purpose is getting out of school for the summer, going to the pool every day, and going on vacation to the beach. When you’re in high school, life’s ultimate purpose is to be popular, cool, beautiful, and to have as much fun as possible. When you’re in college, it’s all about trying to find out how you want to spend your next forty years. Later, life’s purpose shifts to getting married, having kids, making money, traveling, moving up the corporate ladder, or getting a bigger house or a more luxurious car. In the Christian world, as ministry takes centerstage, our dreams might center around being a famous worship leader, a world-renowned author, an influential teacher, a missionary, or a prophetic voice that can tell people their deepest secrets.
- g) Whether secular or religious, born of the Spirit or pagan, each of us have a deep yearning to make a difference, to discover our purpose and reason for existence, to find life’s deeper meaning, and to live for a destiny that is greater than ourselves. Unfortunately, most of us try to satisfy this deep craving through a humanistic, man-centered approach. Putting ourselves at the center, life’s

ultimate purpose ends up revolving around human goodness, human compassion, human giftedness, human effort, and human glory.

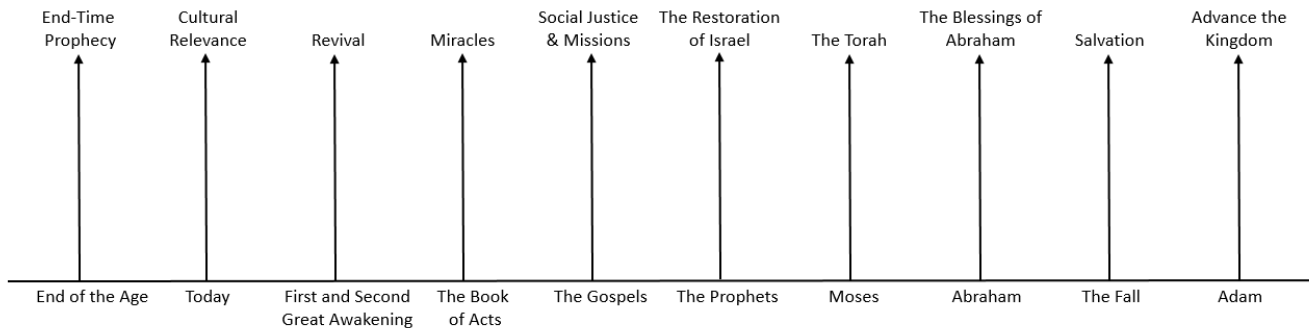
II. A God-Centered Approach to Discovering the Meaning of Life

- a) To truly understand the meaning of life, we must shift away from a man-centered approach to a God-centered approach. We must take the inherent drive for purpose, meaning, and significance burning inside of us and extrapolate it Godward rather than turning inward.
- b) DeVern Fromke, in his outstanding book *The Ultimate Intention*, said, "It is imperative that we recognize what is the deepest gnawing within the human breast. Adequate answers to the purpose and meaning of life must be found. We must recognize that man can only be a saint or a sinner by choice, but he is first an inquiring philosopher by nature."¹
- c) C.A. Jones said, "There is no attribute of man's personality more evident and universally recognized among men than this sense of purpose and of divine destiny."²
- d) This inherent drive for purpose and meaning was placed inside of us by the Lord Himself, and until we discover why He created us and what our purpose is, we will forever be adrift, aimlessly trying to achieve meaning, significance, and destiny in our own wisdom, strength, and resources.
- e) Fromke goes on to say, "It is imperative that we direct every believer to develop a truly God-centered philosophy of life—this means we must see all things as properly related to God and His ultimate intention. Alas, not only the worldling, but even the believer attempts to interpret all things as they primarily relate to himself."³
- f) We must discover why God created the earth, why He created humanity, what we are on earth for, and why will still have a beating heart and breath in our lungs. We are on a quest to discover the end for which God created the world and why he created mankind.
- g) As Fromke put it, "The purpose for which man lives is the mainspring. This must be right, or all else will surely be wrong. Nothing less than a philosophical rectification—which adjusts man in his motive, purpose, and vision—will produce a proper relatedness and power to fulfill the divine intention."⁴

III. The Proper Starting Point

- a) If we are to successfully discover the meaning of life, we must have the proper starting point. We must begin with God Himself. A truly God-centered philosophy of life, when we see as God sees from a heavenly perspective, is the only way that we can discover our purpose, meaning, significance, and destiny.
- b) In seeking a heavenly perspective, many still make a grave mistake by not having the proper starting point. The following chart, which shows how the starting point (at the bottom) affects how we interpret God's ultimate intention (the end of the arrow at the top), will help explain what I mean. Let's discuss this by starting at the end of the age and working back in time to Adam.

The Starting Point & Ultimate Intention



- c) The End of the Age: If we try to discover God's ultimate intention by reading the book of Revelation, we might assume that God created the world in order to display His power. We might reason that God wanted to showcase His strength and might by releasing judgments upon the wicked, casting Satan into eternal punishment, and establishing His kingdom on the earth. Though these events will take place and we should diligently study the prophetic Scriptures, God's ultimate intention for creating the world was not to display His majestic power by fulfilling end-time prophecy. Unfortunately, there are many prophecy scholars who have become so engrossed in understanding the end times, who the antichrist is and where he will come from, when the Lord will return, and when the rapture will take place that they have overlooked God's ultimate intention. If the end of the age is our starting point, then we will mistake the fulfillment of end-time prophecy as God's ultimate purpose.
- d) Today: If we try to discover God's ultimate intention by looking at the church today, we might assume that it's to present the gospel message to the culture in a relevant way. We might think events, conferences, and church services, where large crowds come to hear the gospel communicated in a palatable way, is what fills the Lord with deepest joy. Attractional services with professional musicians, state-of-the-art videos and media, and skilled communicators in buildings that look more like a club or a movie theatre than a traditional church is what the Lord is after. Obviously, we should present the gospel in a relevant way to win the lost, but God's ultimate intention transcends our trendy church services and communication styles. If today is our starting point, then we will mistake cultural relevance as God's ultimate purpose.
- e) The First and Second Great Awakening: When we read about the First and Second Great Awakenings and how the Holy Spirit anointed leaders such as Jonathan Edwards, George Whitfield, John Wesley, and Charles Finney to turn a nation back to God, we might assume that revival is God's ultimate intention. Today, the focus of entire movements is to fill stadiums with intercessors and worshipers who are praying and fasting for a Third Great Awakening. Obviously, America desperately needs a Third Great Awakening and we need to gather together for prayer and fasting for the Lord to release a nation-shifting revival. Nevertheless, revival is not God's ultimate intention. If the First and Second Great Awakening are our starting point, then we will mistake revival as God's ultimate purpose.
- f) The Book of Acts: Reading through the book of Acts is awe-inspiring and breath-taking as we see what happened when the Holy Spirit was poured out in power. The sick miraculous healed. The lame leaped for joy. Thousands born again and baptized. Dreams, visions, trances, angelic visitations, translations from location to location, preaching that inspired true repentance, church growth, a multiplication of disciples, and a sense of awe and wonder as heaven invaded earth. There has never been such a mighty move of the Holy Spirit like we see in the book of Acts. Nevertheless, outward demonstrations of power are not God's ultimate intention. Signs, wonders, and miracles are not God's ultimate destiny for mankind. If the book of Acts is our starting point, then we will mistake signs, wonders, and miracles as God's ultimate purpose.

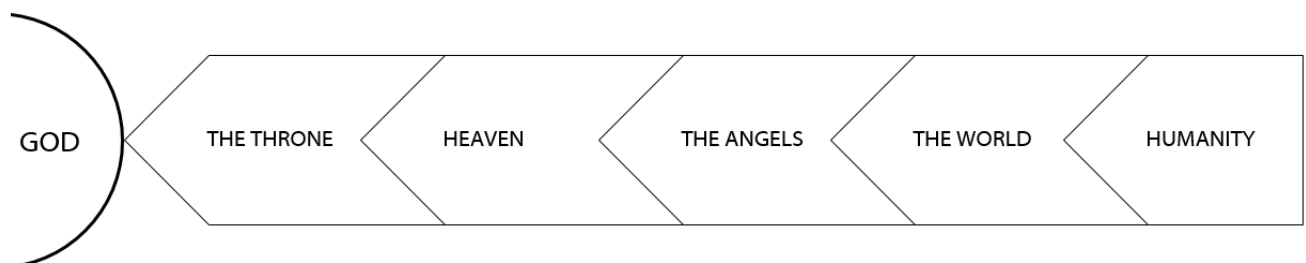
- g) The Gospels: The ministry of Jesus was unlike anything we've ever seen. The dead were raised. The blind received sight. Paralytics walked. Captives were liberated from demonic oppression. The poor had the gospel preached to them. The apostles were trained and equipped to take the gospel to the nations—to bring hope to the hopeless, freedom to the captives, and to disciple nations. Yet many who read through the gospels walk away believing that God's ultimate intention was social justice, compassion, and missions. The assumption is that God's ultimate aim for creating the world was to liberate the captive, bring deliverance to the oppressed, to heal the sick, to end cycles of poverty, and to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. Undoubtedly, everything that Jesus did in His ministry is desperately need today, including healing, deliverance, preaching the gospel to the poor, and taking the gospel to the nations. However, social justice and missions were not God's ultimate intention. These are only the means to the end of God's ultimate purpose for creating the world. If the Gospels are our starting point, then we will mistake social justice and missions as God's ultimate purpose.
- h) The Prophets: The prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, Zephaniah, and others point to a glorious time in the future when Israel becomes the praise of the earth and the nations stream to it. Words fail to describe how glorious this golden age of prosperity, righteousness, peace, and utopia will be. The nations will lay down their weapons of war and the animal kingdom will even be in harmony. The anti-Semitic nations who once hated Israel will bow down and kiss the feet of the Jewish people. Though the restoration of Israel will be a glorious time, God's ultimate intention for creating the world was not to make Israel a praise in the earth. If the Prophets are our starting point, then we will mistake the restoration of Israel as God's ultimate purpose.
- i) Moses: The story of the Exodus, when God miraculously delivered the Hebrews from Egyptian captivity and buried their armies on the floor of the Red Sea, is fascinating. Seeing how the Lord came down upon Mount Horeb in blazing glory and gave Moses the Law stuns us. All the types and shadows of Christ in the feasts and sacrifices display God's meticulous attention to detail. Nevertheless, neither the Law, the feasts of Israel, nor the Torah were God's ultimate intention. If Moses is our starting point, then we will mistake the Jewish roots of Christianity as God's ultimate purpose.
- j) Abraham: The Abrahamic Covenant contains some of the greatest blessings in history. God promised to bless Abraham, to make his name great, to give him the land of Israel, and to bless him with prosperity, health, destiny, a great family, success, protection from enemy attacks, and a joyful heart.⁵ Paul said that all who are in Christ are heirs to the blessings of Abraham (Gal. 3:9-16). Though God enjoys blessing His New Covenant children, a blessed life is not God's ultimate intention. Sadly, many leaders in the *Prosperity Gospel* movement have become so focused on receiving God's blessings that they have drifted far from God's ultimate intention. If Abraham is our starting point, then we will mistake God's blessings for His ultimate purpose.
- k) The Fall: Perhaps the most common starting point in Christianity is the fall. Many denominations, movements, and ministries look to Adam's sin as the starting point for discovering God's ultimate intention. When the fall is the starting point, the end for which God created the world is salvation, grace, forgiveness, and redemption. The finished work of the cross becomes the ultimate aim in preaching, teaching, ministry, missions, and church planting. It even seems heretical to suggest that God's original intention for mankind transcends salvation. Nevertheless, when God created the world, His intention was not for man to fall and to then bring redemption. The Lord's aim was for Adam to partake of the tree of life and to eventually have God's life released in fullness within him. Salvation, grace, forgiveness, and redemption are essential, for apart from the finished work of the cross we are lost, dead in our sin, and hell bound. But salvation is not God's ultimate intention. Rather, salvation is the means God uses to restore us to His eternal purpose. If the fall is our starting point, then we mistake salvation as God's ultimate intention.
- l) Adam: If our starting point is God's command to Adam to be fruitful, to multiply, and to take dominion over the earth, then advancing the kingdom is seen as God's ultimate intention (Gen. 1:28). Those with this starting point emphasize God's governmental rule, His authority, and

extending the kingdom of God into the seven mountains of culture, including the mountains of religion, family, education, government, media, arts and entertainment, and business. Certainly, advancing the kingdom of God, influencing the culture as salt and light, reigning in life, and occupying until He comes is essential. Nevertheless, if Adam is our starting point, then we mistake advancing the kingdom as God's ultimate purpose.

IV. Eternity Past Should Be Our Starting Point

- a) Not having the proper starting point has caused entire denominations, movements, churches, and ministries to focus upon things of lesser value than God's ultimate intention. Don't misunderstand what I'm saying. End-time prophecy, impacting the culture, revival, miracles, social justice, the Great Commission, the restoration of Israel, God's blessings, advancing the kingdom, and salvation are all essential. But these pale in comparison to God's ultimate intention. In fact, without the fall of man, most of these focuses would be unnecessary. If Adam hadn't eaten from the tree of knowledge, there would be no need for salvation, revival, end-time prophecy, social justice, the Great Commission, or the restoration of Israel. God's life would have been imparted into man and man would have eventually been filled with the fullness of God's life. This life would have then been imparted to subsequent generations until all the earth was filled with men and women who were possessed with God's life.
- b) We have drifted so far from God's original intention that entire movements are focused solely upon end-time prophecy, revival, the gifts of the Spirit, social justice, the Great Commission, the restoration of Israel, the Jewish roots of Christianity, God's blessings, salvation, or impacting the culture with the kingdom of God. I'm not saying that we shouldn't emphasize these vital truths. I'm trying to push us beyond the starting points we have just discussed into God's eternal thought, eternal desire, and eternal will. I want us to consider a starting point that is before humanity, before the creation of the world, even before the angels, heaven, and the throne. If we step back into eternity past—back to the beginning when it was just God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit dwelling together in approachable light in deep fellowship and intimacy—then we can discern God's ultimate intention.
- c) See the chart below to better understand eternity past. Reading from right to left, you see that eternity past was before humanity, the creation of the world, the angels, heaven, and even the throne.

Eternity Past



- d) DeVern Fromke wrote, "It is important for us to recognize God's 'before' and His 'after.' Let us go back in time—back into God's heart before He began creating anything, back before redemption was even necessary. Let us go back to the 'blueprint' stage of His planning. What was God's intention then, before He began any of His activity on earth or in heaven? When we start reading in Genesis, 'in the beginning,' we see God's creative work. But the Apostle Paul takes us back 'before the foundation (beginning) of the world.' What was God's deep desire and intention in that great 'before'? What was on the 'white paper sheet' of His heart before He began creating the universe?"⁶

- e) Going back to God's blueprint stage of His planning takes us beyond the "in the beginning" of Genesis 1:1 and into eternity past, described by both Jesus and Paul as "before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24; Eph. 1:4). Here in eternity past there was no humanity, no sin, no need for salvation, no world, no angels, no heaven, and no throne. It was God and God alone dwelling in approachable light in the fellowship of the Trinity.
- f) Let's go back to that time when it was truly "in the beginning." As John said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God" (John 1:1-2). If we go back to eternity past, there we will find the eternal Son hidden inside of "the Father's heart" (John 1:18, NLT).
- g) If we could go back to the beginning all we would see was "unapproachable light" (1 Tim. 6:16). A light so intense that nothing could penetrate it; a light so intense that the brightness of the sun would pale in comparison; a light so intense it would make the present heaven and earth flee away in utter terror (Rev. 20:11). Yet this light was not some cosmic force or celestial object. This light was a Person. John said that "God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all" (John 1:5).
- h) Within the radiance of this unapproachable light, the eternal Father, the eternal Son, and the eternal Spirit dwelt in unbroken union, joyful fellowship, and deep intimacy for billions and billions of years.⁷
- i) The ecstatic pleasure and delight that the Father had for His Son during this pre-creation period filled the Father's heart with unbroken satisfaction. Jesus referenced this love when He prayed to His Father before His crucifixion, "You loved Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). We can't fathom the depth of the Father's boundless, passionate, affectionate, and ardent love for His beloved, eternal, uncreated Son, who is and has always been an exact representation of the Father (Heb. 1:3). The Father's love for His Son never had a beginning!
- j) Hidden inside of the Father's heart throughout eternity past, the Son was the object of His Father's affection and love as the two were bound together in perfect union by the Holy Spirit. The euphoric love that God has for God is beyond words. The intimacy, deep conversations, and unending communion between the Father and the Son through the Spirit could never be articulated by any manmade language. Words fail to describe the infinite, eternal relationship of glorious love, intimacy, fellowship, and union between the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit.
- k) In our ignorance, we might look at this and think, "How boring! For billions of years the Father and the Son just looked at each other, talked to each other, and loved each other? They had nothing to entertain them—no sports, no movies, no video games, no social media. How boring!" Yet we can say with certainty that the Father and the Son were never bored. Never lonely. Never needy. Rather, they had billions of years of unbroken joy, pleasure, and delight in the fellowship of the Trinity. Like David said, "In Your presence is fullness of joy" and "pleasures forever" (Psa. 16:11). Mankind in our fallen and broken state cannot comprehend the depth of ecstatic joy that exists in the fellowship of the Godhead in eternity past.

V. The Eternal Council of God's Will

- a) At some point in eternity past, the Father and the Son had a formal council, a meeting where they discussed with one another the creation of the throne, heaven, the elders, the angels, the universe, the world, humanity, and the ages that would span into eternity. In this eternal council, the Father and the Son determined their purpose for creation, the reason why they would create the world, and the intention for their prized creation—humanity. Paul alluded to this eternal council in Ephesians 1:11, where he said that God "works all things after the counsel of His will" (Eph. 1:11).
- b) Let's consider the phrase "the counsel of His will" for a moment. In the Greek, the word "counsel" is *boulē* and it's derived "from a root meaning 'a will,' hence 'a counsel, a piece of advice" that "is the result of determination."⁸ When used outside the New Testament, *boulē* conveyed the result of a process of deliberation in which something was determined.⁹

- c) As a cross-reference, consider Jeremiah 23:18-22, which states, "But who has stood in the *council* of the LORD, that he should see and hear His word? Who has given heed to His word and listened?...But if they had stood in My *council*, then they would have announced My words to My people, and would have turned them back from their evil way and from the evil of their deeds."
- d) Comparing Ephesians 1:11 with Jeremiah 23:18-22, we see that the Lord works through heavenly *councils* whereby the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit give their *counsel* for the purpose of making decisions and establishing plans. Just so we are clear, a *council* is a group of people that gathers for the purpose of giving advice, making decisions, and establishing plans while to *counsel* is a verb meaning to give advice for the purpose of making decisions and formulating plans. When a *council* meets, they share their *counsel* about different topics in order to make the best decisions and plans given all of the known information.
- e) Putting together Ephesians 1:11, Jeremiah 23:18-22, and the meaning of "counsel," it becomes clear that when Paul described the "counsel of His will," it was a heavenly council in which the Godhead deliberated and determined God's eternal purpose and the reason for creating the angels, the world, and mankind.
- f) When Paul said that God "works all things after the counsel of His will," Paul is taking us back "before the foundation of the world" into eternity past (Eph. 1:4). Just so that we have the proper context of Ephesians 1:11 and all that Paul intended to convey, consider some of the phrases that Paul used in Ephesians 1-3:
- "He chose us in Him *before the foundation of the world*" (Eph. 1:4);
 - "He *predestined* us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:5);
 - "We have obtained an inheritance, having been *predestined according to His purpose*" (Eph. 1:11);
 - "This was in accordance with *the eternal purpose* which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:11).
- g) Let me clarify the phrase "predestined." Unfortunately, Calvinism has hijacked this word and turned it into something that Paul never intended. When Paul wrote Ephesians 1:5 and 1:11, he was not saying that God predetermined that Person A would be saved but Person B would be predestined to hell. If we dive into the meaning of the Greek word for "predestined," we'll discover that this idea of predestination taught in Calvinism is not what Paul had in mind. In the Greek, the word for "predestined" is *proorizō*, which is derived from the words *pro* and *horizō*. *Pro* simply means "before" and *horizō* means "to define, to mark out the boundaries or limits, to determine, appoint."¹⁰ Putting these two words together, you see that "predestined" means that God defined or determined His purpose beforehand, which as Paul clarified, was "before the foundation of the world." Thus, the meaning of "predestined" is "to mark out beforehand, to determine before."¹¹ This determination beforehand was not that some would be chosen to go to heaven and others would be chosen to go to hell. Rather, God's prior determination was His "eternal purpose" that was decided in His eternal council before the foundation of the world, when the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit discussed and decided their ultimate intention for creation (Eph. 3:11).

VI. Observing God's Eternal Purpose in the Scriptures

- a) When Paul described "the counsel of His will"—which as we've seen is the eternal council of the Godhead that established His eternal purpose—notice that God "works all things" based upon the decisions and plans established in this council. What an important statement! This means that everything that God has done and revealed in the Scriptures was established in His eternal council before the foundation of the world.
- b) If we look at the Scriptures and extract out what was necessary because of the fall—such as the covenants, the finished work of the cross, justification, forgiveness, redemption, mercy, and

restoration—we can safely determine God's original intention. Put another way, if we trace what would have happened if Adam had eaten from the tree of life instead of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we can safely discern God's original intention. With this in mind, it becomes clear that God's eternal council established both His original intention and His redemptive plan to restore us to His original thought, plan, and purpose after the fall.

- c) Keep in mind when I use the term "eternal purpose," "original intention," or "ultimate intention" throughout this class, I'm referring to what God intended if the fall had not happened and salvation and redemption were unnecessary.
- d) As we detail God's eternal purpose throughout this class, the question might arise, "How do you know that was established in the eternal council?" Because the Scriptures do not always say this was established in the eternal council but that wasn't, it's helpful to remember that God "works all things after the counsel of His will." That means both His original intention and His redemptive plan were established in eternity past in His eternal council and that everything He has ever done or will ever do is based upon the decisions established in this eternal council.
- e) Perhaps an analogy will help us see God's eternal purpose scattered throughout the Scriptures. Imagine that you have a five-hundred-piece jigsaw puzzle scattered upon a coffee table but you were missing the box with the picture of the finished product. To assemble this puzzle, you would have to carefully examine the colors and the shape of each puzzle piece and put it with other similar pieces until you could put together small portions of the puzzle. Following this process, you would have segments of the puzzle assembled in various stages until finally the whole puzzle was finished. Likewise, different passages of Scripture reveal God's eternal purpose established in His eternal council, but it's like putting together a complex jigsaw puzzle. You have to carefully examine the context and see where it fits together with other Scriptures.
- f) From my study, the places where God's eternal purpose is most clearly revealed is in the two trees in the garden (Gen. 3), John 17, the book of Ephesians (especially Chapter 1), Romans 8, the book of Colossians, the book of Hebrews, Revelation 2-3 in the eternal rewards offered to the overcomers, and Revelation 21-22 in the description of the new Jerusalem. When you put these different passages together like a jigsaw puzzle, you arrive at God's ultimate intention in creating the world. This will become more clear throughout this class.

VII. God's Eternal Purpose for Humanity

- a) In God's eternal council, the Godhead determined that they would have a creation—men and women—who would be brought into the eternal fellowship, love, and intimacy that the Father and the Son have enjoyed for all eternity. Jesus alluded to this in His *High Priestly Prayer* in John 17 when He prayed, "That they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).
- b) As you meditate upon John 17, you begin to see God's original intention unfold. Namely, you discover that God purposed that we would:
 - Be with the Son in the heart of the Father (John 1:18; 17:21, 24);
 - Have the Son in us (John 17:26);
 - Be in union with the Father, the Son, and with one another (John 17:21-22);
 - Know that the Father loves us like He loves the Son (John 17:23);
 - Love the Son like the Father has since eternity past (John 17:24, 26).
- c) In summary, Jesus' *High Priestly Prayer* details God's eternal purpose to bring humanity into the unceasing fellowship, love, and intimacy that the Father and the Son have enjoyed for all eternity.

- d) For mankind to be brought into such a place of glory and holiness, it was determined that the eternal Son would forever be the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). Whether or not mankind fell, the eternal Son would always be the only Way to the Father, the Truth in whom all of God's Word would be embodied, and the Life that would be imparted into every man and woman who would receive Him, leading to His life filling them unto fullness.

VIII. Humanity's Choice

- a) In this eternal council, it was determined that humanity would be given a choice to be their own god and live for themselves or to surrender their lives, be filled with the life of the Son, and mature into an exact representation Him. Thus, in the eternal council, the Father and the Son determined to offer humanity the choice of eating from two trees—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life.
- b) In the eternal council, it was decided that eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would transform mankind into their own deity, having the ability to live independently by themselves, having the knowledge of what was good and evil, and deciding what was right in their own eyes.
- c) Eating from the tree of life, on the other hand, would result in an exchanged life, where man would lose his independent self-life and the life of the eternal Son would be imparted into him. As mankind was progressively filled with the life of the Son, he would eventually be conformed into the image of the Son and become an exact representation of Him.¹² Thus, the Father would have a family of sons who were just like the eternal Son of His delight (Heb. 2:10).
- d) It was also determined that the Son would have a bride in full union with His life, who would love the Son with the same fiery passion that the Father has burned with in eternity past (John 17:26; Rev. 19:7). This bride would be in full union with the Son as His uncreated and indestructible life filled her unto fullness until she was joined to Him in an unbreakable, eternal union.
- e) As a creation filled with the fullness of the Son's life, the Father and the Son would have an inheritance in a people (Eph. 1:18). The Father would have a family of sons, the Son would have an equally-yoked bride, and the Holy Spirit would have a temple in which He dwelled in fullness. Ultimately, God would bring His inheritance into the fellowship of the Trinity, where mankind would enter into the eternal fellowship, love, and intimacy that the Father and the Son have enjoyed forever.¹³
- f) In God's eternal thought, eternal desire, and eternal will, it was established that the Father's sons and the Son's bride would be allowed to dwell in the holiest of holies—in the very bosom of the Father—to be with the Bridegroom forever in the heart of God and to enjoy forever what God has forever enjoyed in the fellowship of the Trinity (John 1:18; 17:24). It was determined that God's inheritance would be in full union with the Father and the Son, and for all eternity, experience what the Father and the Son have experienced for the endless ages of eternity. Thus, humanity would forever enjoy the same love, intimacy, fellowship, pleasure, and delight that the Trinity has enjoyed forever.

IX. God's Eternal Purpose Summarized

- a) The eternal council of the Godhead, by which God works all things and to which God works all things, can be summarized as follows:
- The Son would be the center of all things and everything would be summed up in Him (Eph. 1:10);
 - The Son would become the Way, the Truth, and the Life that would bring humanity into the eternal fellowship of the Trinity (John 14:6);

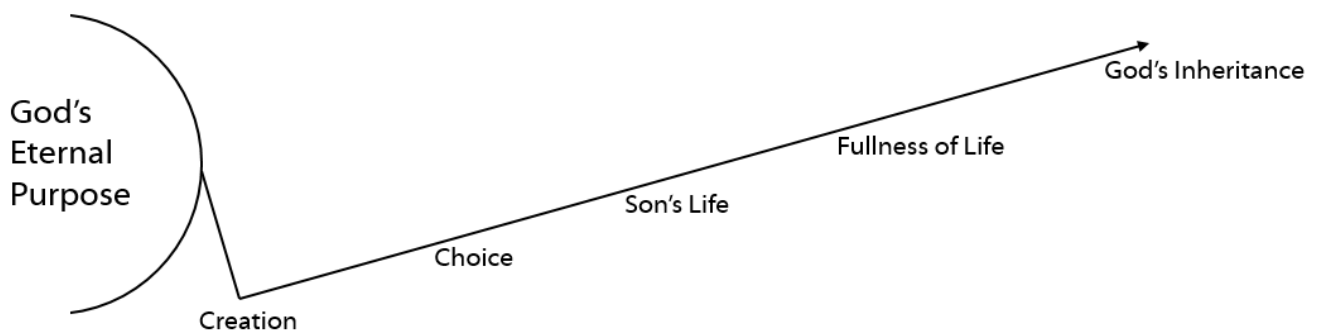
- The Son would become the pattern to which men and women would be conformed into an exact representation of Him (Rom. 8:29);
- The Son would be the Life and He would impart His life into a creation of men and women who would be filled with His life, leading to full union with the indestructible life of the Son (John 14:6; Eph. 3:19, 4:13);
- The Father would have a family of sons who were an exact representation of His beloved Son (Heb. 2:10; Rom. 8:29);
- The Son would have a bride who would be in full union with His life, would embody His nature and likeness, and would love Him with the same fiery passion and pleasure of the Father (Rev. 19:7-9; John 17:26);
- The Spirit would have a temple in which He would dwell in fullness (1 Cor. 6:19);
- The inheritance of the Godhead—the Father’s sons, the Son’s bride, and the Spirit’s temple—would be brought into the Father’s heart with the Son and would share in the eternal joy and delight of the Godhead forever (John 17:24-26; Rev. 14:1-5; Rev. 21-22);
- Filled with the life of the Son and conformed into His exact likeness, God’s inheritance would be sent into the vastness of creation with governmental authority to expand the kingdom of God during each distinct age forever and ever (Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 22:5; Isa. 9:7; Phil. 4:20).

b) Thus, we see the end for which God created the world!

X. God’s Original Intention and His Redemptive Plan

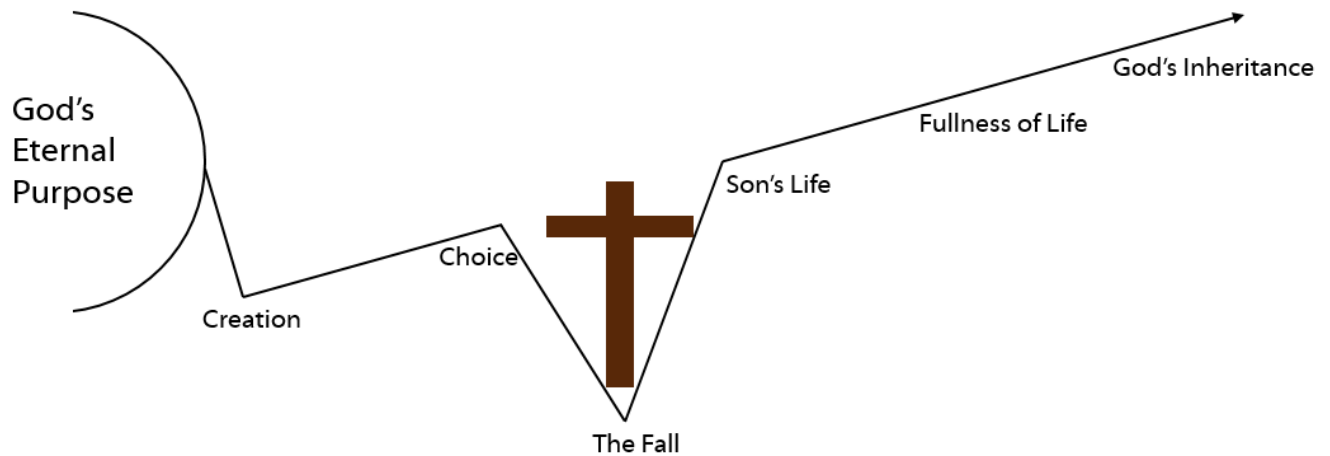
- a) Since God’s eternal council was determined before the fall, Adam’s choice to eat the forbidden fruit did not deter God from His original intention. Whether or not Adam fell, God’s eternal purpose to have a creation filled with the life of His Son and brought into the eternal fellowship of the Trinity would come to pass. When you observe that the tree of life is seen in the garden but is absent until the book of Revelation, you realize that the majority of the Scriptures are about God’s redemptive plan that restores us to His original intention (Rev. 2:7; 22:2,14,19).
- b) Note the chart below that illustrates this.

Original Intention



- c) Notice that salvation and redemption are not God’s ultimate intention but rather the means that God employs to restore us to His ultimate intention.

Original Intention & Redemption



- d) When you see God's eternal purpose, established in eternity past in the council of the Godhead, it gives your life great meaning and purpose. You are not here by accident. You are not some random occurrence in the vastness of the universe. The Father created us so that His eternal purpose might be the driving purpose of our life. The Father created us so that His original intention would be our eternal mission. The Father created us so that we might find our destiny in His ultimate purpose established in the eternal council of the Godhead before the foundation of the world. What a good, good Father we have!

¹ DeVern Fromke, *Ultimate Intention* (Indianapolis, IN: Sure Foundation, 1998), p. 13.

² *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁵ Ken Kessler, *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ* (Marietta, GA: Restoration Times Publications, 2004), 153-160.

⁶ Fromke, *Ultimate Intention*, p. 16.

⁷ Of course, no one knows how long eternity extends into the past before creation, but for the sake of helping us to understand, I put billions and billions of years to make a point that we could better relate to.

⁸ Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *boulē* (Strong's 1012), *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. See

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg=G1012&t=NASB>, referenced on 6/2/2017.

⁹ Gerhard Kittle, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmann Publishing, 1985), p. 108.

¹⁰ Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *pro* and *horizō* (Strong's G4253 and G3724), *Strong's Definitions and Outline of Biblical Usage*". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. See

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg=G4253&t=NASB>, referenced on 6/2/2017 and

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg=G3724&t=NASB>, referenced on 6/2/2017.

¹¹ Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *proorizō* (Strong's 4309), *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. See

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg=G4309&t=NASB>, referenced on 6/2/2017.

¹² Romans 8:29 says that God determined beforehand to conform us into the image of His Son.

¹³ Revelation 14:1-5 is the first-fruits of God's inheritance at the end of the age.