

GOD'S PLAN FOR THE AGES

A Comprehensive View of God's Great Plan from
Eternity to Eternity Illustrated with Chart

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

FROM THE REIGN OF CHRIST ON EARTH TO THE ETERNAL STATE

In our study today we have come to the last lesson in the series on the general theme, "*God's Plan of the Ages.*"

We have considered something of the eternal purpose of the eternal, triune God in His dealings with man, as that purpose has been unfolded from age to age — from the past eternity to the future eternity, from creation to recreation. We have seen it repeatedly proven that, apart from the grace of God, man is a helpless, hopeless sinner; and we have seen that God has, through the ages, offered to sinful man a Saviour, Christ Jesus, the Lord.

In our last lesson we dwelt upon the glories of the Kingdom Age, yet future, but surely to be brought to pass. Today we want to see what God's Word tells us about the events to follow the thousand years' reign of Christ on earth, even unto the eternal state. And in this study today we shall see but another proof that fallen man needs a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

A careful reading of the twentieth chapter of Revelation will show us what we have sought to outline on our chart concerning these final events in the world's history. With the chart before us, let us read these graphic, unmistakable words from the inspired record, noting three facts:

- (1) During the millennium Satan will be bound (Revelation 20:1-3).
- (2) "**And after that he must be loosed a little season,**" when he will lead one more great rebellion against God (Revelation 20:3, 7-9).
- (3) Satan's doom, together with that of all his followers, will be "**the lake of fire**" (Revelation 20:9, 10).

The Last Rebellion Against God

But some will ask: If Christ reigns supreme for a thousand years, why will there be a rebellion against Him at the end of that Kingdom Age of peace? Will the millennium not see a converted world? And the answer is that the world will be converted at the beginning of the millennium.

But children will be born into the world during the earthly reign of Christ, though the curse of Genesis 3:16 will be lifted.

Three times in the eleventh chapter of Isaiah (in verses 6 and 8) we read that there will be little children in the Kingdom Age. And Zechariah 8:5 tells us **“that the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.”**

Just as it is necessary in this age for the children of godly parents to be converted, to accept Christ as a personal Saviour, so it will be during the reign of Christ on earth. And just as today many children of Christian parents are Gospel-hardened, so in the coming day many will be glory-hardened.

All will have to obey the King of kings, for He will rule **“with a rod of iron.”** But some will render feigned obedience. Acts of rebellion against Him will be dealt with speedily, but voluntary heart-allegiance will be required of the redeemed citizens of the kingdom of Christ.

In every age it is the cross of Calvary’s Lamb which must be accepted or rejected by the sinner! The moment Satan is **“loosed out of his prison”** after the millennium, all those who will have rendered feigned allegiance to the King will enter into the last great rebellion against the God of heaven.

Two significant facts are seen in this dark picture:

(1) The record here of rebellion against God proves the inspiration of the Word of God. A human author would have closed the book of Revelation with the golden age of peace, but God states facts as they are.

(2) the incorrigible character of man’s nature is seen in the fact that, apart from the grace of God, even the millennium will not change it! Nothing but the blood of Calvary’s Lamb can change the sinful nature of a human soul — not even the glorious, perfect environment of Christ’s own millennial reign!

Think of it — Eden will be restored! And yet, as soon as the restraint is removed, **“the nations . . . of the earth,”** which will have seen the kingdom of peace, **“the number of whom is as the sand of the sea,”** will follow Satan’s standard against the God of heaven!

This open rebellion will be but another proof of the eternal verity of the words of the Lord Jesus, spoken to all men of all ages: **“Ye must be born again!”**

“Ye must be born again,” my unsaved brother. Will you not go to that “fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel’s veins,” there to receive from Him a “new nature”? He offers it as a free gift. And He is not satisfied with feigned obedience. Church membership and ritualism and benevolence and morality will not save you. **“Ye must be born again!”**

Evidently there will be hundreds of thousands of rebels against God after the millennium.

Among these will be “**Gog and Magog**” (Revelation 20:8). Chapters 38 and 39 of Ezekiel foretell this rebellion, as well as that of the battle of Armageddon just before the millennial reign of Christ. Even the names “**Gog and Magog**” are mentioned in this prophecy.

“That the primary reference is to the northern (European) powers, headed up by Russia, all agree . . . ‘**Gog**’ is the prince; ‘**Magog**,’ his land. The reference to Meshech and Tubal (Moscow and Tobolsk) is a clear mark of identification” - footnote on Ezekiel 38:2, *Scofield Reference Bible*.

Russia today is attempting to obliterate the name of God from the earth; and it is easy for us to conceive of such a rebellion as that described in Revelation 20:8, 9, when we see with our own eyes what Russia is doing today in bold defiance of the living God.

Satan’s Doom

Just here let us note that before the millennium and during that reign of righteousness, Satan will be “**bound . . . and cast into the bottomless pit**” (Revelation 20:3); whereas “**the beast and the false prophet**” will be cast into “**the lake of fire**” before the millennium begins (Revelation 19:20).

It is after the millennium and after the last great rebellion against God that Satan is to be “**cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are,**” to be “**tormented day and night for ever and ever**” (Revelation 20:10).

Why will Satan be cast into “**the bottomless pit**” and not “**the lake of fire**” during the millennium? Because one never returns from the lake of fire! God foreknows how the millennium will end; therefore, He will cast Satan into “**his prison,**” then release him “**for a little season,**” in order that feigned obedience to Him may be revealed, and that sinful man’s need of Calvary may be forever established before men and angels, before principalities and powers.

It seems as if Christ will veil His glory for a time. Satan will be loosed; and a worldwide, but short-lived rebellion will run its course

“**The camp of the saints**” and “**the beloved city,**” Jerusalem, will be the center of attack. But God will quickly put an end to this terrible scene of rebellion and sin. “**Fire**” will come “**down from God out of heaven,**” and Satan’s doom will be forever sealed.

Nor will he be a king in hell. He will be the most miserable of all creatures, “**tormented day and night for ever and ever.**”

This twentieth chapter of Revelation explains why few people, even few Christians, read this last book of the Bible. Satan does not want us to know of his coming downfall and his eternal misery and shame. He seeks to lead men to believe that he does not exist, that there is no hell, thus leading them away from the only Saviour by a false sense of security. But Satan is a powerful being, and he is not in hell today, though he will be throughout eternity.

Space forbids a detailed study here concerning the history of this evil one; but the following Scripture passages should be read carefully and prayerfully by every Christian, that the Lord's people may "**put on the whole armour of God**," to withstand the mighty forces of evil.

We can only outline these passages from the Word of God.

- (1) The description of Satan before he fell through pride (Ezekiel 28:12-14);
- (2) the record of his fall (Isaiah 14:12-14; Luke 10:18);
- (3) the first prophecy of his eternal condemnation and torment (Genesis 3:15);
- (4) the statement and proof that he is "the accuser of the brethren" (Job 1:6-11; Revelation 12:10);
- (5) some descriptive terms which prove that he is a powerful enemy of the souls of men and "**the god of this world**" — the Christ-rejecting world (Ephesians 2:2; 6:12; I Peter 5:8; John 14:30; 16:11; II Corinthians 4:4; Luke 22:31, 32);
- (6) the prophecy of his final and eternal doom (Revelation 20:1-10).

It behooves us, as Christians, to "**resist the devil**" (James 4:7); and it behooves us, as soul-winners, to warn men to "**flee from the wrath to come**."

The Great White Throne Judgment

Closely linked with the doom of Satan is the judgment of the wicked, those of all the ages who have rejected the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning work on Calvary. This scene is described in Revelation 20:11-15; and it will take place at "**the Great White Throne**."

Let us pause and read the record carefully.

First let us get clearly fixed in our minds this truth: The Bible does not teach that there will be one general resurrection day; it definitely states that there will be two resurrections:

- (1) "**The resurrection of life**"; and
- (2) "**the resurrection of damnation** [condemnation]" (John 5:29).

These are the words of the Lord Jesus. We have seen in our former studies that "**the resurrection of life**" will occur at the translation of the church. Revelation 20:5, 6 refers to this event in these plain words:

"This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

Now let us look at Revelation 20:5, which says: "**The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished**." Therefore, the second resurrection can refer only to the wicked and unbelieving. We must remember also that the "**Great White Throne**" judgment is not "**the judgment seat of Christ**."

In Lecture Eleven of this series we studied in some detail about the judgment seat of Christ, which will be the scene of the trial of believers' works. No saved person will stand before the Great White Throne; only the wicked dead will be raised in the second resurrection, there to face the eternal Son of God, whom they rejected on earth.

Now let us look at our chart to see what we have just outlined above.

You will recall that in Lecture Eight, in our study of "*The History of the Righteous Dead*," we noted briefly what the Bible teaches also about the unrighteous dead.

We saw that in Old Testament times the abode of all the dead, both believers and unbelievers, was a place called in the Hebrew language "*Sheol*," the Greek or New Testament word for which is "*Hades*."

We saw also that this place was divided into two compartments: "**Paradise**" and an awful prison; while between these two realms there was "**a great gulf fixed.**"

When the Lord Jesus ascended up on high, He took Paradise with Him into heaven itself. But that awful prison has not been emptied of the spirits of the wicked dead. Before the Great White Throne "**death and hell [hades]**" (Revelation 20:14) will be "**cast into the lake of fire.**"

"**Death**" here speaks of the grave, and refers to the bodily resurrection of the wicked dead; while "**hell**" speaks in this instance of that awful prison where the spirits of the wicked dead are, and where they have been from the time of Cain.

In the second resurrection, body and spirit will be reunited, judged, and cast into the lake of fire. This is the Word of God!

The lake of fire is called "**the second death**" (Revelation 20:6, 14); that is, eternal separation from God, with all that this involves. It is not purgatory; it is not annihilation. "**The beast and the false prophet**" will be "**cast alive into the lake of fire**" before the millennium (Revelation 19:20); and after the millennium they will still be there. (Revelation 20:10).

My unsaved friend, will you not look to Christ and be saved from this awful, eternal torment? There will be no second chance after death. "**He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth** (present, progressive tense) **on him**" (John 3:36).

The Lord Jesus would not have uttered these solemn words if they had not been true!

"**The book of life**" will be opened at the Great White Throne; but none who stand there will have their names written in "**the Lamb's book of life.**" "**The books**" will be opened, and "**every man**" will be judged according to his works. Those who stand before the Great White Throne will have rejected God's grace; therefore, they will be judged according to His standard of righteousness. No one but the Lord Jesus has ever been able to keep God's holy standard; "**for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God**" (Romans 3:23).

All will be “**without excuse**” in that day. Idolaters have had the witness of the creation — the sun, moon, stars, all nature — to testify to the existence of God. (See Romans 1:20). Those who lived before the Law of Moses had the ministry of angels; those under the law had the Ten Commandments and the whole Book of the Law; those who lived when Christ was on earth saw the manifestation of God in the flesh; all who have lived in this present Church Age have had the light of the complete Word of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world; those who live during the millennium will behold the glory of Christ.

“**So that they are without excuse**” who reject the grace of God.

And the verdict will be final — eternal! Once more, my unsaved friend; let me beg you to accept Christ. He will wash all your sins away, and you “shall not come into condemnation” (John 5:24). But if you refuse Calvary, you will meet Christ at the Great White Throne — not as your Saviour, but as your righteous Judge. You cannot escape meeting the Son of God!

“A New Heaven And A New Earth”

Following the Great White Throne judgment the earth will be purified by fire.

Peter describes what will take place, saying:

“The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up . . . Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (II Peter 3:10-13; compare Hebrews 12:26, 27).

How God will bring this to pass, we do not know; whether He will let the mighty forces of nature come into play, we cannot prophesy. But we do know that the earth is on the crest of a molten ball of fire.

However God brings it to pass, the new earth will emerge from that baptism of elemental and judicial fire — clean, beautiful, holy. Every stain of sin, every mark of evil, will be wiped out. The condition of the earth as it was according to the record of Genesis 1:1 will be restored — with a “plus.” And the Son, as a Man, will hand the kingdom back to His Father (I Corinthians 15:28), plus something He would never have gotten, but for sin. He will have a vast multitude of the redeemed to behold and to share His glory, trophies of His infinite love and measureless wisdom. The earth will be no longer His “**footstool**”; it will be His throne!

The Eternal State

Even in the beautiful description of the New Jerusalem and the eternal state of the righteous, the Holy Spirit has not omitted a grave warning to those out of Christ. In Revelation 21:8, 27; 22:11, 15, 18, 19, we read these searching words. We need not dwell longer on this subject here, but we would have every unsaved soul drink from the fountain of “**the water of life**,” so freely offered in these closing verses of the inspired record.

And to the saint, no word of ours can add to the sublime message of the closing chapters of the eternal Word of God! We would only pause to think upon some of the wonders which await the sinner saved by grace.

In our last lesson we noted the fact that, in point of time, the message of the book closes with Revelation 21:8; and that from 21:9 to 22:21 we have a kind of postscript, which shows the relation of the New Jerusalem to the millennial earth.

We noted also the two descendings of this heavenly city:

- (1) It will shine, as a vast chandelier, over the millennial earth, then ascend while the earth is being purified by fire; and
- (2) it will come down until it is associated with “**a new heaven and a new earth**” in the eternal state.

For the sake of clearness and brevity, let us here contrast in outline the millennium with the eternal state of the redeemed.

But first let us note one more thing: In eternity all national distinction will pass away.

This is what John meant when he said: “**And there was no more sea**” (Revelation 21:1). The figure of the “**sea**” in Scripture represents the nations.

In the beginning God did not divide men into nations; these came as a result of sin at the tower of Babel. Jeremiah likens the nations to “**the troubled sea.**” “**The beast**” will arise “**out of the sea**”; i.e., the nations. But in the eternal state “**there shall be no more sea**”; all national distinction will pass away.

Only one nation, Israel, will continue forever (Isaiah 66:22); and Israel did not come into existence as a result of sin!

The Millennium

1. Jerusalem will be an earthly city.
2. The Jewish temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 40-43; Revelation 7:15).

The Eternal State

1. The New Jerusalem is a heavenly city.
2. There is “no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” (Revelation 21-22).

(A temple shuts man out of the Holy of Holies, where God dwells; and it shuts God in. There was no temple in Eden; until sin entered, God had unbroken fellowship with Adam. Then when sin came, a temple was necessary. In the eternal state it will be done away, for God’s fellowship with man will be forever restored).

The Millennium

3. God's servants "**shall serve him day and night in his temple**" (Revelation 7:15).
4. The sun will shine upon a literal, an earthly kingdom.
5. "**The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light**" of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:24, 26).
6. Righteousness shall reign (Isaiah 11:4).
7. Christ shall rule with "**a rod of iron,**" though there will be feigned obedience on the part of some.

In the millennium the twelve apostles will "**sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel**" (Matthew 19:28). The reference to them and to the twelve tribes in Revelation 21:12-14 is in perfect harmony with the relation between the New Jerusalem and the earthly city of the King. The twelve apostles were the first "**stones**" to be built into the mystical body of Christ, which is His church. Therefore, it is to be expected that their names should be engraven upon the foundation stones of the New Jerusalem. And through them God will administer justice to His chosen people, Israel.

The glories of the New Jerusalem are beyond human comprehension. "**Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him**" (I Corinthians 2:9). And this will be the eternal home of "**the bride, the Lamb's wife**" (Revelation 21:9), His church, which He bought with His own precious blood.

Every scar of hypocrisy, every trace of death, every trail of the serpent, every sorrow and tear and pain will be done away. "**And there shall be no more curse!**" Throughout all eternity the redeemed shall behold the face of the Son of God — that face which was once marred — "**and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there**" (Revelation 22:4, 5).

My friend, have you ever looked by faith into the face of the Son of God, that you may behold His glory through all eternity? "**Blessed are they that . . . may enter in through the gates into the city**" — that "**city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God**" (Revelation 22: 14; Hebrews 11:10). "**He which testifieth these things saith. Surely I come quickly . . . Even so, come, Lord Jesus**" (Revelation 22:20).

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The Eternal State

3. "**There shall be no night there**" (Revelation 21:25, 22:5).
4. "**They need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light**" (Revelation 22:J).
5. There is "**no more sea**"; in heaven all national distinction passes away.
6. Righteousness shall dwell (II Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:3).
7. "**There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth**" (Revelation 21:27).