

GOD'S PLAN FOR THE AGES

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

By

Louis T. Talbot
Chancellor of Biola College and Talbot Theological Seminary

Copyright @ 1936

CHAPTER FOUR

THE AGE OF HUMAN GOVERNMENT

As we continue these outline studies of "*God's Plan of the Ages*," let us remember that we must necessarily pass over much of the detail that is both vital and instructive. It is our purpose here not to make an analytical study of certain portions of Scripture, but rather to view the broad sweep of God's dealings with man from the beginning.

To this end we have considered in our former studies the eternal Triune God and His eternal purpose, man innocent, and man under conscience, together with certain related facts of striking significance. We have seen that from the beginning God passed man through different trials, or administrations, or dispensations, to show man his utter ruin and helplessness apart from Divine grace.

Two of these dispensations we have considered briefly, discovering the general trend of all these times of testing:

- (1) God's trial of man;
- (2) man's utter failure;
- (3) God's judgment of sin.

Thus God tested man during the Age of Innocence; man failed; and God in judgment drove him from the Garden of Eden, pronouncing the curse upon Satan and upon a fallen race. Then followed the Age of Conscience, a new trial; here man failed again; and the corruption and violence that overspread the earth in the days of Noah were swept away by the purifying waters of judgment.

Today we shall see how the third dispensation, the Age of Human Government, followed the same course: a new trial, failure, judgment.

Now as we come to the study of this dispensation, let us look once more at our chart.

At a glance we note several outstanding facts:

- (1) The Bible record of events during this period of time is found in Genesis 8:20-11:9;
- (2) this age covers some 430 years;
- (3) it extends from Noah to Abraham;
- (4) it began with an altar built **“unto the Lord,”** and ended with rebellion against God at the Tower of Babel; it began with Noah in fellowship with God, on a purified earth, and it ended with degenerate man defying the living God.

All this speaks to us of how God gave man a fresh trial, under favorable conditions; of man's failure; and of God's righteous judgment of sin. It is just another proof to man that he cannot save himself, that he needs a Divine Saviour to make him righteous, fit to stand in the presence of a Holy God.

“Noah Buildded an Altar Unto the Lord”

The scene with which this new trial of man opens is very beautiful. Noah and his family had been saved from the flood that covered the earth, and in gratitude to God:

“Noah buildded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour”
(Genesis 8:20, 21).

The altar throughout the Old Testament speaks to us of sacrifice.

Always it points on to the cross of Christ. In Hebrews 11:7 we read that **“by faith Noah . . . became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”** And Noah is in heaven today because he believed God's promise of a coming Redeemer. He acknowledged the eternal truth that the only ground of blessing is on the basis of shed blood. **“By faith” “Noah buildded an altar unto the Lord.”** And God accepted Noah's sacrifice and honored his faith.

We have seen in our former studies that in the Old Testament, side by side with the record of the development of sin in the earth, there is the scarlet thread of sacrifice — from Genesis to Malachi. Side by side with the story of man's sin and failure and helplessness there is the promise of the coming Redeemer, Christ Jesus, the Lord.

Thus it is that a holy, just God who cannot tolerate sin is revealed also as a merciful, loving God who offers a way of escape from impending judgment. And that way of escape is always, only, by the way of the cross of our crucified and risen Lord.

It is very significant also that every dispensation begins with God's bringing man back to the place of sacrifice, while every dispensation closes with man's getting away from it.

This is a message that needs to be stressed in our own day. All about us we see an ever-increasing apostasy.

Many who “call” themselves Christians are blinded by Satan; their souls are lost because they have “**trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant... an unholy thing**” (Hebrews 10:29).

“**It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul**” (Leviticus 17:11).

Are you sheltered beneath the cleansing blood of Calvary's Lamb, my friend?

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.”

God's Covenant With Noah

When “**Noah builded an altar unto the Lord . . . the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart**” some very significant words.

Turn to Genesis 8:20-9:27, and read the entire passage carefully to find what the Lord said. “*God's covenant with Noah,*” we call these words; and rightly so, for note that at least seven times, as the Lord addresses Noah, He uses the word “**covenant,**” referring to it as “**my covenant with you,**” or “*the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature.*”

In this covenant which God made with Noah there are several important facts to remember, among which are the following:

1. God Promised Never Again to Destroy the Earth with a Flood.

As a token or sign of this promise God set the rainbow in the clouds. When we see the bow in the heavens, therefore, we may know that God is looking upon it and remembering His covenant with Noah, even as He said.

*2. God Promised Never Again to Interrupt the Seasons “**while the earth remaineth.**”*

For thousands of years “**seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night**” have not ceased. (See Genesis 8:22). What a constant reminder of the providence of God!

*3. God Gave to Man Animal Food, saying: “**Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you**” (Genesis 9:3).*

In this connection the Lord said also that the fear of man should be in the heart of the beast of the earth and the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea. But at the same time one highly significant restriction was given:

“Flesh with life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat” (Genesis 9:4).

The blood represents life; the blood of the animal sacrifices was symbolic of the shed blood of the Lamb of Calvary; and God said, **“The blood . . . shall ye not eat.”**

4. God Put Into the World His Governmental Law.

He placed a sword in the hands of Noah, saying: **“Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man”** (Genesis 9:6).

Before the flood there was no human government; every man did that which was right in his own eyes. That is the reason why Cain was not killed when he murdered his brother; human government had not been established. But what was the result of God's trial of man before He instituted human government? Corruption — violence — failure — sin — ending in the flood!

When God gave Noah the responsibility of government, He instituted, as a fundamental law, capital punishment: **“Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.”** That was God's governmental law, not the Mosaic Law. Keep this distinction in mind; and remember that this fundamental law was not abrogated later by the Mosaic Law.

We have in this world today many sentimental people who think they know more than God Himself. They would abolish capital punishment. But God put government into the world to restrain sin. In His sight it is a terrible thing to take a life. To be sure, it is the civil government's business to administer the extreme penalty. Most certainly it is not to be executed by mob-rule and lynching. But God will hold judges and juries responsible for the administration of justice in the earth.

Every civil officer is **“the minister of God to thee for good,”** Paul tells us; **“for he beareth not the sword in vain”** (Romans 13:4).

Of course, this does not mean that he is a minister of the Gospel, serving man's spiritual need: it means that he is a minister of governmental power put into his hand by God, before whom he shall be called on to give an account of his trust.

In this connection let us never confuse these passages of Scripture which refer to a Christian with those which refer to human government. As Christians, we must not avenge ourselves; we must return good for evil. The context of these Scripture passages always makes clear the application, whether they admonish Christians to exercise forgiving love, or whether they refer to civil government.

Let us remember also that God's Word does not deny the murderer pardon from sin and eternal life. It is right that we should pray for the salvation of the condemned man, and seek to lead him to Christ. David was a murderer, and he was forgiven. But a sentimental setting aside of God's governmental law has led to a great crime wave in our country today. Human life is cheap; the murderer too often escapes justice; whereas in his execution he makes known the enormity of murder and the value of a human life.

Some years ago Governor Pollock of Pennsylvania refused to pardon a young man who was sentenced to die for a deliberately planned murder. In this Mr. Pollock was acting as a governor. Shortly before the execution, this high official, acting as a Christian, sat in that young man's cell and talked to him about his soul. He said to the condemned youth that, while he could not escape man's law, yet One had come to take his place before God.

“You cannot escape the law of Pennsylvania,” he explained, “for there is none to die for you. But so far as your relationship to God is concerned, you may escape; for Christ died in your stead.”

Do you see, my friend; that Governor Pollock was talking as a governor and as a Christian? He was obeying God's fundamental law in administering justice, at the same time pointing the sinner to the Saviour who is both just and the justifier of him who believes in His shed blood as an atonement for sin.

Man's Failure to Govern Himself

God met Noah at the place of sacrifice and made a covenant with him, giving to man a fresh trial. As we read on in the Genesis record, we see also that man failed to govern himself, to say nothing of governing his fellow-creatures. Even Noah, who had experienced the delivering power of God, failed to control himself, and “**was drunken,**” bringing shame upon his own household.

So it has ever been. Man lets riches possess him; he is a slave to sin; and in shame and remorse he fails to govern himself or others.

Why are dictators arising in the world today? Because human government is breaking as man gets farther and farther away from God. The world needs a Governor, a Ruler! That Governor walked this earth nearly two thousand years ago; but wicked men said, “**We will not have this Man to rule over us.**” And they thrust Him out of the world at the point of a spear.

But the Christian can look up to Him, as He now sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and utter that prayer of hope: “**Even so, come, Lord Jesus.**” For Jesus is coming again to rule in righteousness and peace. And “**the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea**” (Isaiah 11:9).

Political Babylon — Nimrod — a Type of the Antichrist

Though God's fundamental law of government has not been set aside, yet the Age of Human Government, God's third great testing of man, given to show to him his need of a Saviour, ended only a few hundred years after it began.

It ended in a political confederacy under Nimrod, in open defiance of God at the Tower of Babel. We read the story in Genesis 10:8-10; 11:1-9. Of Nimrod we read that “**the beginning of his kingdom was Babel**” (10:10).

The name “**Nimrod**” means “*rebel*.” As a rebel against God, he is a type of “**the lawless one**” who will be revealed after the translation of the church, and who will in that day build a great civilization in defiance of God.

The form which Nimrod's rebellion assumed was a great confederacy against God; his aim was a world empire.

Conceiving the idea that in unity there is strength, he defied God who had told the people to scatter abroad over the face of the earth. In the judgment that came upon the people at the Tower of Babel God showed that any unity which leaves Him out will be scattered and swept away.

In disobedience to God's command, this godless civilization in the day of Nimrod had said:

“Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:4).

So also will the Antichrist gather around him a great confederacy of nations just prior to the return of Christ to the earth; his aim will be a world empire.

Nimrod, we read, was “**a mighty hunter before the Lord**” (Genesis 10:9).

The Jewish rabbis tell us that these words “**before the Lord**” signify this wicked man's defiance of God; that is, he was “**a hunter**” of souls “**before the Lord**,” seeking to turn them away from God.

What a picture this is of the Antichrist who will form a great, godless federation of people, during the seventieth week of Daniel! This federation will be the revived Roman Empire, which will be swept away when Christ returns in glory.

Three times in the Genesis record we read of the “**mighty**” Nimrod. Likewise, the Antichrist shall work “**lying wonders**.”

Nimrod's genealogy is traced back to Cush, a descendant of Ham, upon whom rested the curse. Surely the curse of God rests upon Satan and his masterpiece, “**the man of sin**”!

Nimrod was king of Babel. The Antichrist will come as a counterfeit of the King of kings, seeking worship as God.

The end of Babel was marked by the descent of Jehovah; for God came down and confused the tongues and scattered the people abroad “**upon all the face of the earth**.”

The end of the Antichrist's confederacy will be marked by the descent of the Lord God; for the Lord Himself shall come to earth to put an end to the reign of the Antichrist, to judge sin, and to establish His millennial kingdom.

Mystery Babylon — A Religious Counterfeit

There will be a religious Babylon, as well as a political Babylon, at the end of time; and it is also foreshadowed in this Genesis record. In Revelation 17:5 this system is described: **“MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”**

The Antichrist will unify apostate Christendom under the Roman Catholic Church — after true believers have been translated, that is, caught away to be forever with the Lord.

The principles of this great religious counterfeit began at Babel; therefore, it is called:

**“BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS
AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”**

As we read further in Revelation 17:6, we see that this religious system, composed of a confederacy of apostate Christendom, is described as being **“drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.”** After the rapture of the church, this confederacy of apostate religions will be formed on the territory of the Roman Empire. And all this is foreshadowed at Babel.

For a more detailed study of the mystery religion, you are referred to our studies of the book of Revelation, chapter 17, published some months ago. For our purpose here, however, only a few paragraphs are quoted from this former radio message. (Acknowledgment is made to Dr. George “W. Davis, Dr. H. I. Ironside, and Professor Hyslop for much of the material that follows here).

“It was in the city of Babel, later called Babylon that all the mystery religions began — those religions that one thousand years later covered the earth . . . The founder of Babel was Nimrod, but the foundress of the mystery religion connected with Babylon was Semiramis, the wife of Nimrod. She is not mentioned in the Bible, though her son, Tammuz, is. Archeology has discovered her story from the monuments.

“The central mystery was this: The wife of Nimrod claimed that she gave birth to a child who had no human father; she declared that he was conceived by the Great Spirit above. His name was Tammuz.

“As we study further, we shall see how, in this central mystery, the devil has sought to bring to naught all the purposes of God that were going to come to pass through Christ, 'the seed of woman' (not the seed of man); and Satan has sought to accomplish this by presenting a counterfeit.

“The wife of Nimrod, therefore, presented Tammuz to the people as having a mother, but no human father. The figure used in connection with the mystery of Babylon was the wife of Nimrod with a crown on her head and with a little baby in her arms — Tammuz. Archeologists who have gone to India, to Egypt, to Greece, and to ancient Phoenicia have found that a thousand years after Babel was erected the mystery religion had spread all over that part of the world. Isis and Horus in Egypt, Aphrodite and Eros in Greece, Venus and Cupid in Italy are some of the designations of this religion adopted by different nations and systems. If you go to any museum, you will find that from all these countries archeologists have dug out of the earth statues of a woman with a crown on her head, having a baby in her arms.

“Connected with this mystery, there are hundreds of lesser mysteries; for instance, sanctification through purgatory, the use of holy water, the eating of the wafer that was presented to the Queen of the Heavens. If you will turn to Jeremiah 44:16-22, you will find that this particular mystery, the presentation of the wafer to the Queen of Heaven, had gotten into the nation of Israel in the time of Jeremiah, and you will find that this prophet pronounced the curse of God upon those who took part in this rite.

“A remarkable story about Tammuz was this: His mother declared that he had been slain by a boar, and that he arose from the dead on a certain day, which was always thereafter celebrated as the feast of Istar. This feast, supposed to commemorate the resurrection of Tammuz from the dead, was preceded by forty days of weeping and sorrowing; but the feast day itself was one of great rejoicing. This mystery also had corrupted Israel. (See Ezekiel 8:14).

“When Nebuchadnezzar became king of Babylon and built that great city, there was a temple unit a mile and one-half in circumference dedicated to these mystery religions. It was called the Temple of Bel. There were the priests who gave themselves to the services; there were the virgins who were dedicated to Tammuz.”

You will readily see, my friend; that the principles of Babel introduced into the church in the fourth century, formed the basis for worship in ritualistic branches of Christendom such as Romanism. The worship of the Queen of Heaven with the child in her arms, holy water, wafers, purgatory — all these came from Babylon.

After the translation of the church there will be a great confederacy of the apostate religions, which will be Mystical Babylon in full bloom — hence Revelation 15:5: **“MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”** But the Lord will scatter this religious confederacy when He returns in glory at the close of the seventieth week of Daniel to purify the earth in righteous judgment.

This false religious system has been a counterfeit from the beginning. Even the materials used at Babel were counterfeit: **“They had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar”** (Genesis 11:3).

Having turned their backs upon God, they began to build without God; and the result was the scattering of all their ungodly efforts. But the day will come when Satan's counterfeit will meet its doom. In that day the King of kings shall establish a kingdom that will forever put an end to all that is counterfeit, all that is false.

“The Government Shall Be Upon His Shoulder”

My brother, Jesus is coming again, and **“the government shall be upon his shoulder.”**

Man has abundantly proven to all the world that he cannot govern himself or others. He has been pronounced guilty before God. He is no longer under trial. But he will one day face the Governor of all the earth. And before Him every man will have to bear **“the wages of sin,”** which **“is death,”** unless he has claimed by faith **“the gift of God,”** which is **“eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

Are you ready for His coming? Have you gone to the altar of sacrifice, His cross, where He shed His blood as an atonement for your soul? Have you given Him your life, to govern it, to direct it into channels of service for His name's sake — for time and for eternity?

“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13).

“Prepare to meet thy God,” and be ready to welcome His return with joy. For the Christian it will be indeed a day of victory!

“The government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end” (Isaiah 9:6, 7).

~ end of chapter 4 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
