

Summary of the Plan of God

Introduction

Once upon a time when there was no time God made a plan.

Everyone loves a good story. God is the greatest storyteller of them all. Countless years ago He began a drama that dwarfs all dramas in terms of plot, character, and setting by a near infinite order of magnitude. The stage and scope of God's drama occupies the entire physical universe and all that is beyond—hidden from us. God is the archetypal writer who has written a drama with heroes and villains, life and death, triumph and tragedy. In this drama, God has given His creatures the freedom to choose. But as the writer of a novel knows the choices his characters will make, God knows the choices we will make. He chose, in his wisdom, to create as He created. His goal is to bring glory and honor to Himself so that His creation might rejoice in that glory—for we are heirs of it. In His wisdom God determined a fallen and redeemed world would be more glorious than a world which never fell. We who have trusted Him will receive His accolade, as actors receive applause at the end of the play.

Eternity, the Angelic Creation, and Creation of the Universe

God has existed eternally in perfect harmony. He exists as One in nature or essence and Three in person or role as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Godhead share attributes of sovereignty, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, veracity, eternal life, righteousness, immutability, justice, and love. In eternity past God created sentient beings to serve Him. These were angels—spirit beings with great knowledge and power. He named the preeminent angel Lucifer, the Day Star (Isaiah 14.12). He was governor of heaven and had the privilege of orchestrating the worship of God (Ezekiel 28.11-19). Sometime after God created the angelic

host, He created the physical universe (Job 38.7). At some point, Lucifer became displeased with his exalted role. He wanted more than to be the highest and most beautiful creature of God: he wanted to be God. Instead, he became Satan, the adversary of God, a twisted, fallen creature. In his rebellion, he convinced a third of the angels to follow him against God (Revelation 12.3-4). This began sin in the universe. Thus began the conflict between good and evil—evil, which is goodness gone bad, spoiled. Instead of millions of wills working in harmony, there became millions of wills in opposition to God.

The Creation of Mankind

We have no information of how long the angelic creation existed before God created man. Why did God create Man? The best answer is He created man to resolve the angelic conflict and the problem of evil. From what the Scriptures indicate, God wished to demonstrate His goodness and that man would choose Him for His own sake. This is what faith is all about. The book of Hebrews tells us it is impossible to please God apart from faith (Hebrews 11.6). The one thing God wishes from us (and the only way we can have a relationship with him) is our trust. The book of Job provides a wonderful microcosm and mini-drama of the larger drama God is playing out with the human race. When we believe God, when we exercise trust in the work of Christ for our salvation (believing the gospel—that Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead, 1 Corinthians 15.1-4) we agree with God that we are incapable of pleasing or commending ourselves to Him by our own efforts. We are left to trusting and depending on His goodness and work on our behalf. This act of faith is a choice of sides. Such an act of faith is a defeat for Satan. When we put our trust in Christ we transfer our allegiance from those in rebellion against God, His enemies, whose chief is Satan, to God.

God created man perfect, without sin. He enjoyed a perfect relationship with his Creator. Satan, hating God, perceived

(rightly) that man's creation was a threat to him and his ambitions. Satan is the great enemy of both God and man and wishes to enslave and destroy the human race. He deceived Eve into eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—the one tree's fruit God had forbidden Adam to eat (Genesis 2.15-17). Adam, in contrast to Eve, was not deceived (Genesis 3.13; 1 Timothy 2.14); he knew what he was doing and ate in rebellion. God had warned Adam that the day he ate from the Tree he would die. Adam and Eve died immediately—not physically (that came later) but spiritually. Their relationship and communion with God, which they had enjoyed freely, without inhibition, ended. Theologians call this the Fall. From this one act, spiritual death passed to all humanity. The Scriptures reveal we are “in Adam” and that his sin imposed a death sentence upon us (1 Corinthians 15.22). God was merciful, however, and drove Adam and Eve from Eden to prevent them from eating from the Tree of Life, which had the ability to restore and rejuvenate. Without this Tree their bodies weakened and decayed until they died physically. But God gave Adam and Eve the promise in Genesis 3.15 that a redeemer would come to redeem the loss they had brought upon themselves and the human race.

God's Dealings With Mankind

God's first dealings with man were with all mankind. We have lost many historical records of ancient man but some archaeological evidences remain to show that early man built great civilizations. The pyramids give us some insight of their technology. In Genesis 6, we read the strange account in which the “Sons of God” cohabited with women and produced men of great strength and power called the Nephilim (literally, “fallen ones”). These Sons of God were fallen angels (Genesis 6.2, 4; Job 1.6. 2.1, 38.7) and their activity was Satan's strategy to corrupt and destroy the human race. It was nearly successful. From these unions come our stories of gods, goddesses, demigods, etc. that have passed down through

mythology and folklore. During this time the earth became so corrupt and full of violence (Genesis 6.5, 11-12) that God determined that to preserve the human race He had to destroy the existing world and began anew.

God found one righteous and genetically unpolluted family (Genesis 6.9), the family of Noah, and instructed Noah how to build a great ship, the ark, to survive the flood that God would bring. This flood destroyed all humanity except Noah and his immediate family. From this family and Noah's sons, Shem, Japheth, and Ham, came all the races and nations of the earth. Civilization thus began again. But instead of spreading forth across the world as God had commanded (Genesis 1.22, 9.1), the people settled and consolidated at a place called Babel. There they tried to set up a world government with a united religious system to worship the heavenly host instead of God. This was the beginning of polytheism. The heavenly host are evil spiritual beings (fallen angels) behind false religion. Babel (Babylon) is the source of all religion that does not acknowledge YHVH as the one true God. To preserve the human race, God broke up this world government and religion by confusing mankind's language (Genesis 11.6-9). The language barriers that were created divided the people and they formed nations and created nationalism. Nationalism is a divine institution which curbs evil through the balance of power of nation states.

God's Dealings With Israel

Since humanity as a whole had rejected God, God changed His program. He began a new plan and revealed Himself to one man through whom He created a new race of people—the Jews. They would be the central actors in His plan to bless the world and defeat evil. God chose Abram, who became Abraham (Genesis 12.1-5), who responded to God in faith. God made a sovereign covenant with him (the Abrahamic Covenant, Genesis 12.1-3, 15.1-20). The elements of that covenant were that God would make Abraham great, that he and his offspring would be a

blessing to all mankind, that God would bless those who blessed him and curse him who cursed him, that Abraham would have innumerable offspring (physical and spiritual), and that God would give Abraham and his offspring land, "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." Satan is committed to defeating God's plan and destroying His agents. This explains why the Jewish people have been the focal point of hatred and persecution throughout history. The Jewish people occupy the center of gravity in God's strategic plan since all of God's spiritual blessings are mediated through the Jews and in particular, through one Jew, the Lord Jesus Christ. Though he has made numerous attempts, Satan has failed to destroy God's covenant people. His evil plan is still in effect and will reach a crescendo during the period of time the Lord Jesus called the Tribulation (Matthew 24.15-22). Since God's prophetic covenant promises remain unfulfilled (Abrahamic, Land, Mosaic, Sabbatic, Davidic, and New covenants) Satan's purpose to destroy the Jews remains in effect. If he accomplishes this, God's plan fails. God would be a liar. Anti-Semitism is Satanic. One only has to look at the nations who vote against Israel in the United Nations to understand who is running the governments of this world.

The Abrahamic Covenant formed the basis of God's future, sovereign covenants made with Israel: the Palestinian, Davidic, and New Covenant. God's promises were made to Abraham through the line of Jacob or Israel. For hundreds of years, God dealt with Israel, blessing them for obedience and disciplining them for disobedience. God also fought for Israel. His greatest victory for them was their deliverance from Egypt. Through Moses, God gave the Mosaic Law (Exodus 20.1-17), which revealed God's holiness and righteousness. The Levitical sacrifices were pictures or types which pointed to Christ. The animal sacrifices "covered" sin until the death and resurrection of Christ who was the paschal lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13.8). When Christ was finally revealed, His death and resurrection defeated the

power of sin, death, and Satan. All the festivals, buildings, the Tabernacle and Temple, and all its instruments were symbols and pictures of Christ and His work.

When Jesus was born, He was proclaimed as Israel's King by John the Baptizer. Both John and Jesus preached to Israel a message of repentance and acceptance of the King and His kingdom (Matthew 3.1-2, 4.17). Jesus' first miracle, making wine (wine throughout the Bible was a symbol of gladness and blessing) at the wedding of Cana, was a sign of this kingdom. Rather than accept Jesus as the Messiah, the nation rejected and crucified Him. God, however, satisfied with the work of his Son, raised him from the dead. Christ's victory over sin and death is the basis of all spiritual blessing for those who have trusted in Christ. Christ's victory is the basis for the future physical and spiritual blessings promised to Israel in the Abrahamic, Palestinian, Sabbatic, Davidic, and New covenants. Despite repeated pleas by Jesus' disciples for the nation to repent and accept Jesus as the Messiah after His resurrection, national Israel hardened its heart and continued to reject Him. After 40 years of testing, in 70 A.D., God judged the nation. The Romans destroyed Jerusalem, the Temple, and the nation. Israel ceased to be a nation and became scattered throughout the world (Diaspora). This status continued for almost 1900 years, until 1948, when the nation of Israel was reestablished.

God's Creation of the Church (Body of Christ)

While God was working through the disciples of Jesus in their ministry to Israel, He also began to work in a new and different way. This change may be compared to the change God made when he called Abraham. Even though national Israel had every opportunity to accept Jesus as the Messiah, God knew they would reject His Son. In the midst of Israel's rejection (recorded in the Gospels and Acts) God chose a man by the name of Saul. Saul, a brilliant Pharisee, was caught up in the national rejection of Jesus and became its leader and a

violent opponent of Jesus' disciples and the message they were proclaiming. He was so zealous an adversary that he petitioned and received from the Jewish authorities the power to persecute those who were following Jesus beyond the borders of Israel (Galatians 1.13-14; Acts 9.1-2, 22.3-5, 26.9-11). Nearing Damascus, the resurrected Jesus revealed Himself to Saul and changed his heart (Acts 9.3-8, 22.6-11, 26.12-18). Following that experience, he became as zealous a follower of Christ as he had been His enemy.

Through Saul, who became Paul, God revealed a new entity, a new creation, which we know as the Church or the Body of Christ (Ephesians 1.22-23 ; Colossians 1.18, 22). For hundreds of years, God had worked exclusively through the nation of Israel. If one came to God, one came through Israel. However, in light of Israel's continued rejection of the Messiah, God's new plan, the Church, the body of Christ, removed distinctions between Jew and Gentile. The Church was a "secret" creation, previously unknown, God revealed to Paul. Most early believers in Christ were Jews. But under the ministry of Paul, the majority changed from Jew to Gentile. God commissioned Paul as the "apostle to the Gentiles" (Romans 11.13; Galatians 2.7-9) just as Peter and Eleven had been commissioned to be apostles of Israel. Paul was given the "gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20.24), which was different from the "gospel of the kingdom" which was proclaimed by the twelve apostles, John the Baptizer, and Jesus.

To be a member of Christ's Church is an incomprehensible blessing. Paul wrote believers of his gospel have been blessed with every spiritual blessing, are positionally seated with Christ in the heavenlies (Ephesians 1.3), have heavenly citizenship (Philippians 3.20), will one day rule angels (1 Corinthians 6.3) and are joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8.17). The Church is the body of Christ and Christ is its Head. Every believer is in a grace relationship with God and indwelt by God the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 1.22, 5.5;

Ephesians 5.14). One day God will complete the Church, the body of Christ, and take it to heaven. Following this event, known as the Rapture (the resurrection of the Church), God will return to complete His dealings with the nation of Israel.

Israel Redux

Centuries ago, God revealed to Daniel things that would happen related to future kingdoms on the earth. This was easy for God. He created space, time, and matter and lives outside its confines. God told Daniel about the rise and fall of four great empires—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (Daniel 2, 7). He revealed when Christ would come and when the Antichrist would come (Daniel 9). God gave Daniel a timetable measured in weeks of years of Israel's future and was defined by seventy weeks of years. He told him that at the end of sixty-nine weeks the Messiah would be crucified. That is where we are presently with regard to Israel's clock.

God kept the Church, the body of Christ, a secret. It was never revealed in the Old Testament or Gospels. Only God can keep a secret and He kept it a secret until He disclosed it to Paul. According to Daniel's timetable, one week (of years) remains in Israel's history before the return of the Messiah. That week is known as the "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30.7). Jesus spoke of it as a time of great tribulation. The events Daniel foretold were expanded in detail by the revelation John received from Jesus and is recorded in the book of Revelation. During this period, the Beast, the Antichrist, will arise and deceive the world. He will be brilliant, charming, and a proponent of peace. He will appear as a friend of Israel. But in the middle of the "week" or after 3 ^{1/2} years, he will reveal his true nature. He will seat himself in the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem, in the Holy of Holies, and proclaim he is God. This will be the moment of revelation and enlightenment for Israel. They will recognize

they have been deceived and that this world ruler is not the Messiah but the Antichrist. Jesus foretold these events in Matthew 24. During this period, the Jews will change their hearts and repent. Jesus gave this as the condition for His return. Thus, we know exactly when Jesus will return for His covenant people: He told us (Matthew 23.37-39).

God will seal and protect 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes for a special ministry (Revelation 7.4-8) during this period of tribulation. They will proclaim the Messiah and many will come to trust Him. The apostle Paul, echoing Isaiah, wrote that all Israel will be saved (Romans 11.25-26; Isaiah 66.8). At the end of seven years of terrible tribulation the armies of the world will surround Israel. When the Antichrist has victory in his grasp and all hope appears lost for Israel and the world, Christ in his rôle as the Lord of Hosts, CinC Heaven and Earth, will return from heaven, deliver Israel, and destroy all who oppose Him (Revelation 19).

God's Kingdom on Earth

For hundreds of years, God's prophets proclaimed God's kingdom (Isaiah 2.1-11, 11.1-10; Zechariah 14.8-9). It will be a kingdom in which God will restore the Edenic splendor of earth. Its character will be peace and righteousness. Warfare will cease and people will once again enjoy the long lifespans that were in effect before the Flood. All the blessings that God promised Israel in the covenants will be fulfilled. Jesus will reign as King in Jerusalem as David's greater Son in fulfillment of the Davidic covenant (Zechariah 14.9). Israel will possess the land from the Nile, to the Mediterranean, to the Euphrates. God will write His laws onto hearts. The New Covenant will be established fully. During this time, Satan will be incarcerated (Revelation 20.1-3). It will be a golden age, a time of unprecedented happiness. At the end of this thousand-year age, God will free Satan. Even though mankind will have enjoyed perfect environment: no war, disease,

poverty, crime, and perfect climate through Christ's reign for a thousand years, God will release Satan and he will convince some to rebel against God. God will destroy this rebellion in quick order. God will execute His final judgment upon Satan: He will incarcerate Satan in the Lake of Fire which the Antichrist and the False Prophet already occupy. Those who have rejected Christ will stand before Him in judgment (John 5.22; Revelation 20.11-15). Each person will be judged according to his works. Their own works, as opposed to Christ's work, will be all they have to commend themselves. It will be a court setting and God will say in effect, "What do you have to commend yourself to Me?" No matter how many good works a person has done, they will be insufficient to meet divine holiness and righteousness. The works or good deeds of those being judged will be judged against the standard of the work of Christ. After these works are judged, God will open the Book of Life to see if any basis exists for those being judged. None will be found. The Lord Jesus Christ will exercise his position as Judge (John 5.22) and incarcerate them in the Lake of Fire where they will join Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet for eternity.

A New Beginning

After the final judgment, God will create a new heavens and a new earth—a new universe (Revelation 21.1-4). We do not know what it will be like or how it will be different from our present universe with regard to its physical laws or properties. We do know it will be wonderful beyond comprehension. Death will have vanished. Sun and moon will not exist as sources of light. God's glory will light the earth. The new Jerusalem will descend from heaven and reside upon the earth. It will be immense, measuring 1,500 miles in each dimension. The Temple will be gone since reality will have entirely replaced symbol. Rather than the Temple, which was a pattern of the throne complex of God, the very throne room of God will be moved to earth. The Tree of Life, unseen since

Eden, will reappear. God will have become fully victorious and the possibility of sin or evil will have ceased. All who have loved and trusted Christ will begin a new adventure of love, righteousness, and peace. All will love and adore God from a free and willing heart. John provided a picture of a heavenly scene that gives us some indication of the glory of heavenly worship:

And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying,

“Holy, holy, holy, LORD God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.”

And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” (Revelation 4.4-11)

And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round

about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice,

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.”

And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying,

“Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”

And the four beasts said,

“Amen.”

And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever (Revelation 5.11-14).

God’s story ends as all good stories end. And they lived happily ever after...

The End...

of the beginning...

and the Beginning of that which has no end.

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