

A B C D E F ...

We all know the letters. We all know the tune. It was one of the first songs we ever learned, and for most of us it was the first glimpse into the world of communication and knowledge. Since the advent of spoken language, a **B**asic conceptual understanding of the use of letters has been vital for the understanding of words, sentences, and stories. Without such mastery, one cannot hope to share ones thoughts, ideas, and feelings. **C**onsidering knowledge of an alphabet as a basic building block for the transference of all information, how much more important is this type of simple, pragmatic understanding when it comes to knowing and living the Word of God?

It is vital.

CONTENTS

That's why **Austin Bible Church** is proud to bring you the **ABC Readers**. These read-at-one-sitting study guides are designed and written to bring you the **ABCs** of some of the Bible's most important and definitive doctrines.

As diligent students of the Word of God, we pledge that All ABC Readers will contain:

Accurate Biblical Concepts

From a divine viewpoint perspective, ABC guides will reflect how specific Bible doctrines explain and execute God's grace eternal plan for the ages.

Authoritative Biblical Content

Stating the sovereign Word of God simply, and from the perspective that it is the living, abiding, powerful, and pregnant Word, which is God-breathed and profitable for daily life.

Authentic Biblical Context

Placing line upon line and precept upon precept, ABC guides will highlight God's consistency and integrity, while also exposing the historical truths surrounding major characters, themes, and prophecies.

Unlike other reading materials, each ABC Readers will also strive to put explained doctrines in parallel with God's overall objective of eternally glorifying His beloved Son. In other words, the messages and doctrines contained will inexorably be

All 'Bout Christ

All ABC Readers are written under the direct supervision of Bob Bolender, pastor teacher of Austin Bible Church. According to grace principles of Christian giving, they are offered free of charge, and are distributed in the hope of helping you become the **Absolute Best Christian** you can be.

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Why?

Good question. In fact, it's the best question ever.

To ask is to be human.

To try and answer is to be heroic.

To find the answer and know it's the ultimate truth? Divine.

Fortunately, the answer is out there. It's very clearly written in God's Word. For the true student of the Word, the reasons for the existence of Man are clearly defined. We are here to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ok? Good. We're done. Shortest ABC Reader ever.

In searching through the Scriptures, dividing them, putting them in order and sequence, we find the reasons God created Man. But to look solely for the answer of Man's existence is to take a limited view of the reason for *all* existence. And while the short answer "to glorify Christ" serves as a good basic summary, it pales in comparison to the overwhelming amount of mind-bending, awe-inspiring information the Bible provides regarding God's plan and purpose in creating the known universe.

Why create Man? What is our purpose? Why are we here? *Why am I here?*

We can answer all of these questions, but why not shoot for more. In the larger panoply of God's creation, Man is only one piece of the greater puzzle. We are only one milestone in the overall eternal super objective of God.

Why Man? Why the angels? Why Christ (In His humanity?) Why Satan? Why death? Why sin? Why free will? Why suffering? Why Jews? Why gentiles? Why the cross?

To attempt to answer these questions in the most efficient timeframe, one needs only to look to the Bible and the unfolding story within. Provided a basic framework of the plan of God, from Eternity past to eternity future, we can know where we are, who we are, what our purpose is, and more importantly:

How do created beings on the earth, below the earth, and in the heavens, *how do we fit into God's overall plan?*

To Glorify Christ

Don't put that away. It is, in part, a correct assessment of God's purpose. God loves His Son so very much, and in such a passionate, eternal, joyous fashion that He designed a plan so costly, it would cost the life of His only begotten Son. In turn, Jesus Christ also loved the Father, and agreed to execute the plan: suffering the penalty for all rebellion in His own body on the tree. And

Why? Because it is God's plan to use every element, every happening, every experience, every decision, every sin, and every saint to further glorify His beloved Son.

But this simple statement does not include the "how" component necessary to give us the true extent of His purpose. God's plan is ultimately to *sum up all things in Christ*, to use all of the created universe to physically and spiritually manifest the glory of His Son. In effect, to sum up all things in *their relationship to Christ*, to manifest His glory, and to reflect God the Father's love and eternal admiration.

So what's the first thing we should learn from the study of this monumental plan?

It's not about you.

It's a humbling thought, but it is also a liberating one. We may spend days, hours, even years of our lives searching to find the reasons of the universe, the purpose of Man's creation and condition, but to do so is only vanity if we do not put our position in the plan into the proper context.

It's not about you.

Saved? Fantastic. You will live in eternal happiness with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But were you saved for you? Was God's purpose to create things to save because He Himself was lonely? Did Christ need worshippers to be fulfilled? Did the Trinity need a fourth for golf?

No. God didn't need to create anything. The reason He did so was to express His love for Christ. So, to fully understand our role in His process is to truly understand our place in this universe.

This is our goal: To codify God's specific plan from beginning to end that we might explain His universe and our place within it. Within this plan lie peace, contentment, and the ability to start to understand and appreciate a love that we (if properly oriented) will spend the rest of all eternity enjoying, exploring, and exalting with all our might.

If you are bold enough to want to know the answer to the ultimate question, you can no doubt see the value in addressing its negative. To not know God's plan, to **not** delineate the differences that God clearly draws in His text, is to **not** know who we are, what our purpose is, and how we will be judged in the future. To not rightly divide the Word of Truth is not only in direct violation to God's own commandments, but is to open ourselves up to untold

loss. Furthermore, to not know the truth is many times to believe a great lie, one that can cost us dearly in the eternity to come.

Ignorance of **who** we are, in what **age** we operate, what our **responsibilities** are, creates in our lives the opportunity for us to violate God's plan and actually work against Him in our present stewardship, to be contrary to His great objective! Is that what we want? May it never be!

"WHY?" This is the big question. This is the truth of God's Word. To fight against Him in His ultimate desire to glorify Christ in His prescribed way, and at His prescribed time, is not only to waste our lives, but to ultimately lose out in the greatest campaign of all creation. While still saved, and still happy with Him in glory, we should be vigilant in our quest to further His objective with all our hearts, minds and souls. That is our purpose: **to align ourselves with God's plan and execute it as His servants on this earth, looking forward to the day when all our efforts will materialize and will be summed up and found worthy in relationship to our Lord.**

The study of God's plan: Our breakdown.

1. Grasping God's Plan
2. Graphing God's Plan

The first half of this book will endeavor to help the student of the Word grasp God's plan. We will define and describe the plan as an entity, enlightening the reader as to God's intent and purpose, all the while pointing out its many divine attributes.

The second half of this book will be used to graph out God's plan in a basic fashion, citing many of the milestones used by dispensational, categorical-teaching churches to plot out past and future biblical events as recorded in Scripture. While the first part of the book should help the reader understand aspects of God's plan and purpose, the second will help them determine what has already happened, what will happen, and how they fit into the plan according to their place in history.

Part One:

GRASPING GOD'S PLAN

God's Plan: In General

This is the study of the Doctrine of the Plan of God. As defined by Pastor Bob Bolender, it is a study of God the Father's grace eternal plan of the ages for the maximum glorification of Jesus Christ. And it includes the nature and description of dispensations. As stated above, our purpose for diving into this study is to plunge ourselves into the truth of God's Word in an effort to find out who we are, what our position is in this universe, and what our ultimate goals should be.

In looking over God's plan, we should keep in mind a few general facts that will help us share His viewpoint as we do our best to fathom the seemingly unfathomable plan that God Himself has thought through to bring about His good pleasure.

God's plan is vast. It involves every single created being, object, situation, thought, experience, and decision that will happen in time. (For an additional mind blower, you could also include every single situation, thought, experience, and decision *that could have potentially happened as well.*) God knows not only what we actually thought and did, but every thing we could have thought and done. He knows everything, and has planned a perfect plan around every potential.

God's plan is detailed. The Bible gives us an unprecedented amount of detail that backs up God's plan, His reasoning for His plan, the times/dates/places and people who have been a part of it from its inception. New and old Christians alike have to be able to discern what God's actions are, and what they are not, when they happened, and when they did not happen. We must have a basic understanding of the framework of God's plan (dispensations) if we are to have any hope of aligning ourselves to it.

God's plan is complex. By its very nature, God's plan is divinely complex. So complex, in fact, that it includes the creation and interaction of different realms of reality, seen and unseen, inhabited by uncountable numbers of individual beings. Each of these beings has its own individual actions and reactions, hopes, fears, and desires. Each being lives in time, and will also have a place in eternity (either in heaven with God or in hell with Satan and the fallen angels.)

God's plan is precise. While in time, each being lives within a specified timeframe, and during each timeframe God has pre-configured precise details that correspond to His plans for that time span. For example, in the dispensation of Israel, God had specific guidelines for how He communicated to man and who was supposed to be the steward of His Word. These specifics change according to each dispensation, and beings were tailor-made for those specific eras. Furthermore, God has/had a specific purpose for each of these details and guidelines. Nothing is done without a reason, even though we may not completely understand each motive, we can be assured that each one furthers God's ever present drive towards the summation of all things in Christ.

God's plan is consistent. It never changes. He always has His eyes on His prize, and surveys from the beginning of time to the end of time will give testament to God's unwavering will and focus. God wants not only *to glorify Christ*, but to glorify Christ *to the maximum*. Across thousands of generations and among differing realms of existence, God's plan is persistent and unrelenting in its perfection.

God's plan is current and underway. God's plan is current. It's underway. It's happening as we speak. One fact we can all understand and trust about time is that everybody on this earth is experiencing "now" all at the same time. It's right now, right now, no matter where you go. So we can rightfully say: God's plan is in effect, right now! The immediacy should not be tossed away, but embraced and taken to heart. God's plan is moving forward with ultimate and excellent results.

If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ having put your faith for your salvation in Him, then not only is God's plan happening around you, but you are an important part of its positive implementation. Jesus Himself came to this earth not only that you might be saved, but that you might play a part in God's grand campaign.

Thus, God's plan is vast, complex, detailed, precise, consistent, and current. Thus it can also be said that God's plan is in line with His character, and in accordance with His attributes. Ours is a grand and noble study. It is a stunning look into the very mind of the Divine.

The Reason Behind God's Plan

Perhaps one of the greatest comforts we can have in this endeavor is to know that there are answers to our questions. There is a truth, an ultimate truth, and that truth is adequate to satisfy our deepest yearnings. But the validity and usefulness of God's answers achieve goals far beyond the ability to merely assuage our curiosity. On the contrary, God's answers to our questions penetrate the very fabric of existence, and they do so because they are backed up by divine **reason**.

God has a reason for everything He does. The very concept of an accident is a human invention. With a God who knows the future from the past, a God who created everything that was to be created, a God who controls history and makes His plans so perfectly that they can encompass and even use the sins and mistakes of created beings to bring about His purpose, how can true accidents occur?

They can't. They don't. The only reason accidents seem like accidents to us is because we didn't see them coming, and we cannot see the future. But God knew it was coming, and God **can** see the future, and His foreknowledge disallows Him from being taken off guard. God knows exactly what is going to happen, and He either allows it or does not allow it, as part of His sovereignty. So as we look at God's end game (the summation of all things in Christ,) let's fully realize the scope of God's plan from the perspective of reason.

God has a reason for everything He does. No accidents, no mistakes, no wasted motion, no mulling around. From a divine perspective, God's plan will maximize Christ's Glory no matter what. Be it by fire or by blessing, God will realize His intent, and He will explain His actions with reasons that are holy, righteous, and divinely justified.

So what is God's reason? Why does God do everything He has done? We have said it before, but let's let Him tell us in His own Words. (John 5:20-21)

- 20 "For the Father loves the Son,
and shows Him all things that He
Himself is doing; and the Father
will show Him greater works than
these, so that you will marvel.
- 21 "For just as the Father raises the
dead and gives them life, even so
the Son also gives life to whom He
wishes.

The Father loves the Son. From eternity past to eternity future, God the Father's infinite love for His Son is the primary motivating factor. It is a love so

powerful, it has spawned the creation of all the universe. But more than that, since God is righteous and true, we can also know in our hearts that God isn't just making things up or emoting for emotion's sake. God's love for His Son is based on the Son's true character. God delights in Christ because Christ is truly delightful! From God's holy perspective, He is glorifying His Son because His Son deserves to be glorified. From our perspective, we can say that God loves His Son because it is the right thing to do!

God loves His Son and therefore wants to glorify Him. That is His reason. That is the motivation He is basing His actions upon. That is why we are here on this earth, and that is why angels are in Heaven. God planned His vast, complex, detailed, and consistent plan based solely on this one comprehensible reason. It is a good and righteous reason. God will stand on it forever, and will use that reason to judge or justify every temporal event in universal history.

Because of His Love for Christ, He will glorify Christ one way or another. Moreover, God will place all beings in their rightful place of creation: (Phil. 2:10-11)

- 10 ...so that at the name of Jesus
every knee will bow, of those who
are in heaven and on earth and
under the earth,
- 11 ...and that every tongue will
confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to
the glory of God the Father.

God loved His Son, and created all things to be in rightful subjugation to Him. Whether the beings do it willingly or unwillingly, Christ will rule over them and they will confess that He is Lord. But is God merely exercising His sovereignty, creating insignificant trifles to be mindless servants and minions to His favorite Son? The answer is in Colossians: (Colossians 1:19-20)

- 19 For it was the Father's good pleasure
for all the fullness to dwell in Him,
20 and through Him to reconcile all
things to Himself, having made
peace through the blood of His
cross; through Him, I say, whether
things on earth or things in heaven.

Here is further revelation of the character of God's love for Christ, Not only is it the right thing to do, not only is God compelled by Christ's own perfection, but God is also acting on behalf of His **good pleasure**.

This point cannot be overstated. In our overall quest to understand “why”, why all things were created, doesn’t it give us a wonderfully comforting answer to know that the basis for all God’s efforts is indeed love, fondness, and pleasure? And this is not an unspecific love, one that can be tossed around devoid of meaning, but a love that comes to us within an understandable context.

Does God the Father call Himself God the Father for nothing? Does He call Christ His Son just so He can label Him? Absolutely not.

God created fathers. God created sons. God created families. And God created the language and context we use to express these concepts. He has given us the perfect picture postcard to explain and express the specific typology for the type of love that motivates Him.

God loves Christ like a father loves his son. Is that something we can relate to? Is that a distant unfathomable love, or is that a love explained to us through the experience of our own lives? Who doesn’t have a father? Who is alive that wasn’t born of a parent? Although our specific lives might differ experientially, the flavor of love that God is explaining is still very clear and very communicatable. It is a father’s love for his firstborn son.

When asking the grand question of “why,” could there be a better, more fulfilling answer?

Subsequently, take a look at the bottom of the passage as well. God loves His Son, and then loves *us* through *Him*, using His work on the cross to reconcile the creation to the Creator. In this way we have a chance to share in God the Father’s love for His Son in a unique and personal way. God loves Christ personally, and we are in Christ through reconciliation; therefore, we share in God’s personal divine and eternal love for His Son. God loves **us** (saved believers) **as if we were Christ Himself**. He loves the Christ in us.

Not a bad deal, to live in and be a part of the greatest love in all the universe. Count me in.

God’s plan: Bringing about God’s goal.

Perhaps the most important element of any plan is to have an appropriate goal. Without a specific, well-thought-out goal, plans have no direction, no focus. Rest assured, God has a specific goal in mind, and it is founded in His perfect purpose. If we look to the Bible for this goal, it is best summed up by Paul in his letters to the Romans and the Ephesians. (Romans 8:28, 29–31a)

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to

those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

This is a proper generalized statement that we might take for granted. Yes, God makes everything to work together for good in a general sense, but what happens when we look at this passage in context to our study? If God works ALL THINGS together for good (divine good) and we have already established that all things are quantified by every specific action, decision, event, thought, feeling, action reaction in the known universe not limited to this realm of existence but to the angelic realm as well, we start to see just how vast and complex His plan really is. Whether we make the right decision or not, whether we sin or not, whether we believe in Christ or not, all things will work together for His good according to His purpose. This should take some of the pressure off us, especially when we consider God’s perspective:

- 29 For those whom He foreknew,
He also predestined to become
conformed to the image of His
Son, so that He would be the
firstborn among many brethren;
30 and these whom He predestined,
He also called; and these whom
He called, He also justified; and
these whom He justified, He also
glorified.
31 What then shall we say to these
things?

Again we are reminded of God’s eternal, unsurprised, and fully intentioned perspective. While still giving us the right to choose and make our own decisions, and because He knows the beginning from the end, He was still able to devise a plan that will work everything together in a fashion that reaches His overall objective. God knew who we would be, what we would be, and what we would do. Armed with all this knowledge and outside the restrictions of time, God was able to work imperfect and temporal beings into His plan, all the while calling and justifying us and conforming us to the image of His Son. And the more we are conformed, the more we share in His ultimate glory.

So God works all things together for good. This is a wonderful promise and should make us confident that if we follow His prescribed commandments for a healthy daily Christian walk (see *Spirituality and Carnality*) and keep our eyes on the prize (an understanding of our ultimate judgment at the Judgment Seat of Christ, see *Judgment Seat of Christ*), then we can be assured we will play a constructive part in God’s plan.

But Paul doesn't stop there. While giving us a general sense that every element of created life is in play as a part of God's plan, he goes further in his explanation of God's goal when he talks to the Ephesians. While other passages might deal generally with overall endgames of "good," Paul is very precise in his assessment of God's ultimate endgame scenario: (Ephesians 1:9a, 10b)

- 9a He made known to us the mystery of His will,
- 10b ...*(that is,)* the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.

Yes, this goal was once a mystery, but it has been revealed to us because of the age in which we live. This "mystery" and the reasons for it will be addressed further when we get to the dispensational part of our study. But beyond that, we can glean a very exact, all encompassing consummation that will one day take place. This consummation is God's ultimate goal, and one He is divinely intent on bringing about. Is it a general, ongoing goal? Is it something that just goes on forever, all things working for good? Or is there a clear, concise time and place that Paul is revealing to us? (Ephesians 1:9b, 10a)

- 9b according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him
- 10a with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times,

According to God's kind intention (to glorify Christ) which He purposed in Him (in Christ, the executor of God's plan) with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of times. The fullness of times? What is that? When will time be full of Christ? Paul, will you leave us hanging? (Ephesians 1:10b)

(...that is,) the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.

And there it is. Plain as the nose on our face. Paul gives us the goal of all existence. But once again, let's look at this event in context to our overall study.

- From before time even started, God had one motivation:
The love for His Son.
- Because of this motivating factor, He had one intent: **To glorify His Son.**
- To bring this about: **He put together His plan.**
- The **goal of the plan:** to bring about a time in which all elements of existence would be not only manifested, but surmised in their relation to Christ.

All things in heaven, all things on earth (and notice here that there is nothing *under the earth*, as Hell and the damned have already been cast away to the lake of fire) will be summed up as they pertain to Christ and His Glory.

Not beating a dead horse, but the specificity here is not to be ignored. As we look at our own lives as we pass through time, can we not begin to understand the deep riches of knowledge God is revealing to us? Let's try to imagine this scene in as vivid a fashion as we can muster up.

If we can imagine time as a pool, like water we pass through as we live, we can begin to quantify the mass of what we are dealing with. We pass through life (and this is no non-scientific endeavor, Einstein's theories support the idea of time as a dimension we pass through). As we pass through it, we live, we breathe, we think, we act. Our thoughts at specific places in time are recorded. And not just ours, but everybody who has ever lived, both here and in the angelic realm. These events, as if solidified like bugs in amber, will be manifested and judged. (See *Judgment Seat of Christ*.) This manifestation will glorify Christ, either by its destruction in fiery judgment, or by its heralding as eternal reward. Burned or blessed, every element of creation **will glorify Christ** in one way or another. Thus, the manifested thoughts, decisions, and actions of free-thinking and free-loving beings will be lauded by God if those beings:

- Shared a love for His Son.
- Shared the desire to glorify His Son.
- Performed each action in a state of spirituality
(see Spirituality and Carnality)
- Participated in actions consistent with His plan.
- Accepted the objective to bring about the goal of His plan.

God has envisioned, and it will come to pass, a time in which all things will be summed up in Christ, providing the maximum glorification possible.

This is God's plan, His purpose, His will. So now we know.

God's plan: Specifically

A general understanding of God's plan is a wonderful thing to grasp. It is as if we are invited to know the culmination of all things, and are likewise invited to be a part of the festivities. By revealing to us His plans in time, God gives us a chance to join the team, to be His children, and to share in His goals, plans and objectives. Most importantly, He is giving us a role to play in the grand scheme, all the while giving us a taste of what eternity will be for all of us, a never-ending glorious investigation *of* and appreciation *for* the glorious loving relationship between God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

Armed with the general understanding of God's plan, we are now ready to delve into the specifics that make the plan so interesting. Just take a minute to ponder God's thought process, the challenges He faces, and the overall comprehensive nature of what He must accomplish to bring about His goal.

First, God decides that He will create realms of existence. Inside those realms, He will create creatures who can learn to appreciate His Son, or reject His Son. This free will is going to be a problem. God cannot allow sin and rebellion into eternity. It goes against His character and His objective, so He must find a way to deal with all the potential problems such a creation will cause with His divine essence. God is Eternal Life, Sovereignty, Justice, Love, Immutability, and so on. He cannot violate any of the elements of His essence, and He will unequally not favor them either. He cannot simply "forget" sins as they happen, as it violates His character of righteousness. Rebellion must be dealt with, and it must be dealt with in a logical fashion while still meeting His objectives. Talk about complicated! Not to mention costly! The sins of all the world? What can be done to deal with the problem of Sin while glorifying Christ in the process?

Since Man can't save himself, God does it for him, but again, with conditions consistent with His character. God finds a way, through proper planning, to redeem rebellious creations to Himself through the unwavering character of Christ. Not only does Christ accomplish this amazing feat, but He does so in a mortal body, as a man on the earth, and without the slightest hint of rebellion. Moreover, Satan has a beef with the whole plan! Satan wants to thwart God's plan by proving God wrong! So God not only has to solve the Sin problem, but manifest the overwhelming evidence to prove that He has been consistent with His character throughout! Just try to wrap your head around that planning session.

Which brings us back to us and our study. At this point, we want to know how God is executing His plan and what role we play in it. The plan may be vast and complicated, but it can be boiled down to our individual lives, as they are a part of the whole. Where do we get the information to study God's plan? Miraculously, it is woven into the very structure of the revealed Word of God.

Definition, a closer look:

God the Father's grace eternal dispensational plan of the ages for the maximum glorification, pleasure, and blessing of God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here is the definition of our study. But with many topics covered, we can break it up and get a real sense of its parts.

- **God the Father's ...**(the first person of the Godhead. God the Holy Spirit is still God, but works quietly behind the scenes, spotlighting the special love between God the Father and God the Son)

- **...grace...** (all that is possible for God to do for sinning rebellion because of His plan and Christ's perfect execution of His plan)
- **...eternal...** (from eternity, planned outside of time and existence on-infinity)
- **...dispensational plan of the ages...** (a specific plan with specific details according to angelic and human ages and psychological spiritual development through time)
- **...for the maximum glorification...**, (maximum glorification, there is no greater glorification than He will achieve)
- **pleasure, and blessing of God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Even our definition seems vast and complex, but we can be ready by staying true to God's Word. If we have open hearts and spiritual minds, we can know and understand the word of God even in this complex subject. In fact, the Holy Spirit Himself will be our teacher if we are in the proper frame of mind. (See *Spirituality and Carnality*.)

The specifics of God's plan, as revealed by the details of Scripture, will help to shed light on some of the most profound questions in all of history: Why angels? Why Man? Why Jews? Why Gentiles? Why Christ? Why the Cross? What now? What after now?

These are just some of the questions that begin to answer themselves once we understand the nature of God's plan. Generalities aside, there is a whole new realm of specifics that we can glean about God's plan if we look to the Scriptures themselves.

In addition to being vast, complex, consistent, and constant, the plan of God is also:

• **A Grace Plan**

No part of God's plan is earned or deserved by us in any way. In fact, the plan was drafted before any of us existed. It was put into effect before anybody had the chance to do anything to deserve anything. God pours forth the riches of His plan because Christ was worthy and willing to pay the price necessary to bring the whole plan about.

• **An Eternal Plan**

The plan was put in place before the foundation of the world. It was worked out to perfection before time ever started, and in a sense, it has already been completed. The victory is already won, and that victory will be/is being manifested before our eyes without hindrance. As studied in other basic Bible doctrines, we understand that God is *outside* of time. While we are stuck in this world of "what happens next," God is not. He has seen the end from the beginning.

• A Perfect Plan

God never has to jump to plan “B”. In fact, there is no plan “B”. There is only plan “A”. In God’s framework He has made allowance for sin and rebellion, but it never at any point thwarted God’s original plan. God saw the end from the beginning, and already made perfect provision for every person’s individual decisions and actions. For example, in the case of Adam and Eve, God was not surprised or set back by their sin. God was not sitting back, scratching his head, figuring out His next move. There never was a problem that had not already been solved in eternity past. Sin was already worked out as the plan already took into account every decision that would ever be made.

• An Unfolding Plan

Adequately metaphoric, God is unfolding His plan right in front of our eyes. Like a sheet of paper folded upon itself, with each “unfold” God reveals more and more of what His plan will entail. As the information is unfolded, both the newly revealed “mystery” and the previously revealed information take on new interest. Thus, to truly understand the situation of people in other ages, we must constantly keep in mind that they only had a specified portion of the revealed plan.

• A Progressive Plan

Mixing with the fact that God’s plan unfolds, we also must consider that the plan is progressive, moving forward based upon what came before it, and setting up what will come after. In a progressively revealed plan, the information a time or group of people needs is revealed *as they need it and as they can understand it*. For instance, if God were to have given the commandment “Love your wife the way Christ loves the Church” to the early old testament Jews, they would have had no frame of reference on which to base the instruction. They had not seen Christ yet, and had no idea what the Church was going to be. So, God didn’t reveal that information until it made sense.

In parallel fashion, God has clearly made the case that the Church is under a new institution that is different from the one given to Jews in their age. The Mosaic Law, while a good basis of understanding for what is right and wrong in God’s eyes, is no longer the code of ethics we are currently under. The Jews were under the **Law**, and the Church is now under **Grace**. It’s a completely different mode of operation. Under the Law, *actions* were judged and sinful actions required precise ritualistic atonements. Under Grace, we are instructed that even our thoughts are under scrutiny, and the lives we lead not only affect our temporal reality, but take place in a spiritual reality as well (in Heaven.) Under Grace, we are given an expanded freedom through forgiveness (contingent on confession of sin to God the Father, 1 John 1:9), but are also given an added responsibility to live our *mental* lives in accordance with God’s plan.

Further, since Christ’s perfectly sinless life and sacrifice satisfied the Law, it was put away, much in the same way that the sacrifice of bulls and goats has been put away now that Christ has been to the cross. As God’s plan **progresses**, He changes His **tactics**, and He reveals those changes to those who are chosen to carry out His plan on earth.

Thus, it’s fundamentally important to consider **to whom** God has revealed His plan, and **when**. God has carefully unfolded His plan *to* and *through* a variety of vested *stewards*. This progressive unfolding began with the angels, then progressed to the creation of Man in Adam, then the race and nation of Israel, and presently the unfolding of the Plan of God is revealed through the Church (since Pentecost of 33 AD). Understanding the basic outline of this progression is an important part of dispensational study.

• A Dispensational plan

There’s that word again: Dispensational. What is meant by that word is that God has entrusted stewardship responsibilities to certain administrators of His household on earth. He uses specific people and groups of people on the earth, in time, to put His plan into effect.

Now keep in mind that dispensations and dispensational thinking must be absolutely biblical. We cannot simply “make up” any structure that the Bible itself does not support. We can draw all the graphs we want to, but if they are not absolutely founded in the Word of God they are useless to us and cannot help us in this study. Additionally, we are not Dispensational “ists” solely to be “ists.” We are not creating new views or denominations or flavors of Christianity. We are, in fact, using the boundaries that God has clearly delineated to further our study of God’s revealed plans. We are putting the details of the Word to good use, using them to understand the progressive revelation and the pre-architected institutional changes of God.

So what are dispensations anyway? Where do we get them and what are their purposes? Well a true dispensational understanding comes from an understanding of two elements of God’s plan.

1. The time or age in which something happens.
2. The God-appointed *steward* of God’s word and God’s plans on the earth.

The word *steward* comes from the Greek word οἰκονόμος meaning a steward or caretaker of a household. At different times, God has appointed different stewards on this earth to know His word, to know His plan, and to execute His plan.

Why does this matter? Because of human (and angelic) development through time, it became necessary to change the ways in which He dealt with His

creations. Thus, specific characteristics of God’s modus operandi changed according to the time or “age” in which He was dealing with temporal beings.

Using Adam and Eve again, you’ll notice in the Garden that God spoke directly with Adam and his new wife. At that time, God found it appropriate to speak right to man, with sound waves emanating from his voice, and hitting the ears of man. Likewise, when God first spoke to Moses, with inspiration from the Holy Spirit, He used a voice and spoke directly to him. So why doesn’t that happen now? Can we believe it when somebody says that God spoke directly to them? Absolutely not. We now know through an understanding of the differences between that time and this time, that in this particular age, God does not speak directly to man, but speaks instead through His Word. The Bible, the completed canon of Scripture, is sufficient communication in this time, and is special revelation to us as believers in this the Church age. Upon further investigation, you could also say that this is a special communication, not only because we have more information in our Scriptures than any Jew ever had, but also that the special disconnect we have (having only the Bible as our revelation) may in some way be because we are special in God’s plan. We are the Bride of Christ, the Church, and we will be Royal Family of God. Because of this specificity, our specificity, certain details in God’s plan pertain to how He deals with us and are specific to the time we live and to the fact that right now we are God’s chosen people and the stewards of His word.

Before this time, the specifics were different. After this time (delineated by specific revealed events in Scripture) the specific details of who God’s stewards are and what their responsibilities are will change again. The characteristics of the age will be different, and God’s plan for how to deal with those times will likewise be different. It is these differences that give us precise teachings and help us as individuals to fit into God’s plan in our time.

Correctly plotting the sequence of events revealed in God’s plan provides a framework of understanding, revealing God’s intricate wisdom. When it comes to knowing “where we are” in time, we have definite, well-delineated milestones. Each mile-marking passage sets a benchmark for the biblical book it’s found in, but it often also serves as a milestone that helps corroborate other books of the Bible. A comprehensive study of these markers helps us to know what’s going on now and what is applicable to us (as stewards). Just as importantly, it helps us differentiate our time from other times, our people from other peoples, and what rules and guidelines *are* and *are not* applicable.

Thus dispensational considerations help us know the full scope of God’s Word. Comparing Scripture to Scripture from His eternal perspective helps us to place

His revelations in the proper order, with proper importance, and with proper demarcations. This is the way God meant for His Word to fit together (line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little there a little.) Isaiah 28:15

So the word of the Lord to them will be,
“Order on order, order on order,
Line on line, line on line,
A little here, a little there,”

And if we study the Scripture in this fashion, it reveals to us an incredibly diverse multi-dimensional picture of God’s plan through time.

Putting it all together

So specifically, God’s plan is a graceful plan, eternal, unfolding, progressive, and dispensational. God’s plan is outside of time, and it is revealed to those whom God has chosen to carry the torch of His plan in pieces relevant to their ability to understand it and specific to the role they are to play within it. It is recorded for us so we can figure out where we are, and what our purposes should be.

Since we are limited creatures and are subject to the unveiling sequence of time, it seems only fitting that God has unfolded His plan in a like manner. So don’t feel bad if you don’t instantly grasp the whole plan all at once. It’s quite a lot to comprehend, and is the grandest mystery of all. But you aren’t the only ones who have taken the time to study God’s plan. The prophets and scholars

of old yearned for the truth and knowledge of God’s plan from the earliest times. Consider 1 Peter 1:10, 11, 12:

10 As to this salvation, the prophets
who prophesied of the grace that
would come to you made careful
searches and inquiries,

The prophets were gifted men, given prophesies and visions by the Holy Spirit, and they still had to make careful study of what was revealed according to how it matched the Scriptures.

11 seeking to know what person or
time the Spirit of Christ within them
was indicating as He predicted the
sufferings of Christ and the glories
to follow.

They, too, wanted to understand the mysteries of Christ, of salvation, of their

King. Remember, He was initially revealed to the Jews by coming as the *Son of David*, as a King and conqueror! But how did that work with the predicted sufferings of a lamb on the tree? It was indeed a mystery, until:

- 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.

These prophets and scholars were not serving themselves, not just merely gleaning information for their own cause, but to serve *us*. They were the tools used to reveal God's plan to future unfolding generations, *even to the angels themselves*.

This quest is no small endeavor, and the eventual understanding of the breadth and width and height of God's plan should inspire us to study just as hard, longing to look into the depths of God's divinely ingenious preparations for the glorification of Christ as Lord.

God's Plan From His Point Of View

Let's keep in mind a previous assertion, and build upon it. We have said repeatedly that God's plan is **not** about us. This sounds repetitious, but we must be constantly reminded of the validity of this point if we are to understand our place and role in this present universe.

If we want to share in God's perspective, we must wholly and completely accept his objective. **God's absolute objective is to glorify Jesus Christ.** So if you were to ask God a series of poignant questions regarding his plan, you could reasonably expect to hear a similar answer.

Why did you create man? To glorify Christ. Why did you create angels? To glorify Christ. Why did Christ have to die on the cross? To glorify Christ. Why do believers go to heaven? To glorify Christ. Why do unbelievers go to Hell? To glorify Christ.

Now hold on there. Did we just assert that the condemnation of unbelievers is part of God's plan? How can that be? God is a god of love, of righteousness and justice? How can he possibly send human beings to a lake of fire for an eternity of pain and anguish? God's answer: To glorify Christ.

It's so easy, as humans, to think that the salvation of man is the central objective of God's plan. This cannot be further from the truth, and the recognition of this humble fact can help us achieve a focus that is consistent with God's own viewpoint. God loves his Son and has done everything possible to manifest His glory. God loves us as well, but in a different way. We are merely part of the plan.

To illustrate this point further, let's look more specifically at the logic involved in God's plan for our salvation. John declares in his Gospel (John 3:16):

God so loved the world he gave his only begotten Son.

But the word John uses there in *Agapao*. *Agapao* love is a kind of love based on the character of the subject, not the attributes of the object. God loves us inherently as our creator. But according to (John 5:20) God the Father loves Christ with *phileo* love. *Phileo* love differs from *agapao*, in that *phileo* love is based on the attributes of the subject. God loves Christ based upon the character of Christ. God does desire to love us with *phileo* love. He wants to love us because of our character, but there is a problem.

When God looks at the *humanity of Christ*, he sees a perfect, sinless, obedient servant. When He looks at *unbelieving man*, he sees fallen, sinful, rebellious, prideful enemies of God. So with God's objective in mind, He crafted a plan so he could love (*phileo*) man the same way he loved Christ. God figured out in eternity past a plan that would allow him to share His love for His Son with all willing mankind. Here's the logical progression:

1. God first loved Christ, so he put forth a plan to glorify Him.
2. Part of the glorification plan included the creation of man.
3. But all of man, in Adam, sinned against God.
4. God could never love (*phileo*) sin and rebellion. It is against His character.
5. So the barrier of sin fell between God and man.
6. Because of the sin barrier, God prepared (in eternity past) a plan of Salvation.
7. Christ followed God's plan for our salvation by paying for our sins on the cross.
8. We follow God's plan by accepting salvation (through faith in Christ.)
9. When accept Christ, Christ dwells in us, and we are alive in Him.
10. God is then free to love (*phileo*) us, because he loves Christ in us (*see John 16:27*).
11. Thus, Christ has removed the sin barrier and is glorified through the victory of our salvation.

If we follow God's plan, we put our faith in Christ. Through faith we are identified (baptized) with Christ. God is then free to love us by loving Christ in us, and loving us in Christ.

So although we play an important part in this plan, we should never forget that we are not the reason the plan was undertaken. God's plan of salvation, although beneficial to us as believers, was not undertaken with us as the center of purpose. Likewise, God's plan to condemn those who refuse salvation is not inherently designed to punish wrongdoers and wrongdoings. It is designed, in no uncertain terms, to glorify Christ to the maximum.

This transition of thinking is a humbling one, but is central if we are to distinguish man's point of view from God's point of view:

Man's point of view: God sent Christ to save us.

God's point of view: I'll save believers to glorify Christ.

We have a serious role to play, but the entire production is about Christ. God knows the script from beginning to end. The stage has been built and the lights and props set up. Even the audience has been prepared, watching us from the heavenly realm to review and learn from the revelation. But in the end, the plot line is inexorably about the glory of Christ and His deserving character. God is, in effect, only blessing us in the context of blessing His Son. (*See especially Ephesians 1:3ff.*)

So while it can be stated that the Earth is the operational center of the universe, it can likewise be asserted that mankind, as individuals, are not.

How we (humans) fit into God's plan.

From a general perspective, it can be said that man was created to serve as living manifestations of God's grace. Grace is defined as everything God could do for us because of Christ's work on the cross. Thus, when we accept Christ's sacrifice and are saved (according to God's plan), we therefore become positive testimonials to God's faithfulness and the glorious character of Christ who (in His humanity) executed God's plan to the letter.

On the other hand, if we chose **not** to follow God's plan, and we do not accept the truth of God's grace through Christ, man still inevitably glorifies Christ through His **righteous judgment**. Either in heaven, or in hell, Man (all of humanity) will glorify Christ. Every knee shall bow. Every tongue shall give praise.

How we (the Church) fit into God's plan.

In this present age, a new and wonderful mystery is unfolding right before

our eyes. The differences between our stewardship and that of the Jews in the previous dispensation are tremendous. We can only begin to understand this "intercalation" age, this "shift" in stewardship, by carefully studying the Scriptures. In Ephesians, Paul is addressing a very special group of Jews. They are very first stewards of the *Church* age. Here's what he has to say: (Ephesians 3:3-5, 6-7, 8-9, 10)

- 3 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief.
- 4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,
- 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;

Above, note Paul's assertion that the Church is a mystery. This further provides insight into God's plan and its unfolding nature. This mystery was revealed to Paul, but was not made known in previous generations. All revelation is deliberate, and comes at the perfect time and for the perfect purpose. Specifically, God lets us know what we are supposed to know, when we are supposed to know it. These specifics are very important to the people they are revealed to, as we can see in Paul's subsequent teaching:

- 6 *to be specific*, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,
- 7 of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power.

The importance of what is being said here cannot be underestimated. If part of God's plan is to reveal needed information at the needed time, few other examples can compare to this one. Paul, in this instance, is talking to a group of Jewish believers. The Jews, by scriptural historical definition, were a separate group. They were holy, completely *set apart as stewards of God's Word*. Now, with a new age dawning, God reveals to a group of very shocked individuals that the plan has a new twist, and that the boundaries of stewardship have changed.

- 8 To me, the very least of all saints,
this grace was given, to preach
to the Gentiles the unfathomable
riches of Christ,
- 9 and to bring to light what is the
administration (dispensation) of
the mystery which for ages has
been hidden in God who created
all things;

Paul introduces his role to the Ephesians, and to the whole of the Church. It is his job to bring in the new age, a time where in terms of stewardship of the oracles of God there is *no Jew, no Gentile, No slave or free*, but all in Christ. He is defining the new stewardship responsibilities of the Church, and he does so for a very mysterious reason.

- 10 so that the manifold wisdom of
God might now be made known
through the church to the rulers
and the authorities in the
heavenly places.

So that the wisdom of God might be known to whom? The rulers and authorities of the heavens, otherwise known as the angelic host. God is using Paul to reveal His unfolding plan not only to humanity on the earth, but to the angelic host as well.

Paul's new role is more than his job. It's our job too. While he claims to be least of all the saints, he does more than humble himself. He is identifying himself as a saint. And since we are all saints, it is easy to extract our own marching orders from his revelation. Our purpose in this age is to follow Paul's lead. We are to be God's stewards, the caretakers of His Word. We are to testify to the glory of Jesus Christ, to give the gospel to a lost and dying world, to teach the living and abiding Word of God line upon line, precept upon precept, and to represent the kingdom of heaven as salt and light in a lost and dying world.

How do we know all this? Because through the Scriptures, through Paul, through God's preserved Bible we can find our place in this world. We can know what time we are in, and likewise, what time *we are not in*. We can know who we are, and who we are not.

Can you see the importance of dispensational thought? By understanding the differences between ages and stewardships, between periods of time and the progressive development of those charged with God's revealed Word, we can put together a basic timetable that delineates important changes in biblical

history. We can graph out who came before us, what their purposes were, and what specific situations they faced. We can also look ahead, to the next and coming ages. We can, using the Bible as our guide, map out the coming times, the people who will be stewards in those times, their roles, and even their destinies. This mapping, experientially, is the *historical manifested record* of the Plan of God, *in* and *through* the lives of His stewards.

This is our role. This is our quest.

God's Record: The Bible

If we are to study God's plan, we must first know how He reveals it. In the past, He has revealed His plan in person, through prophets, and through His Word. He has also revealed it through the living stories of His followers, His chosen people, and even His own beloved Son. In effect, the Biblical text is the written record of God's plan as it has played out historically. It includes all the revealed truth that God deems necessary for our understanding of His plan in time.

Included in the Bible is the unfolding history of all creation as it relates to the glory of Christ. But if we are to truly understand this record, we must be armed with the one tool necessary to *properly* divide the Word of Truth. We must use *Logos*. We must use logic. (2nd Timothy 2:15)

- 15 Be diligent to present yourself
approved to God as a workman
who does not need to be ashamed,
accurately handling (rightly
dividing) the word of truth.

Another way of translating "accurately handling", is *rightly dividing*. It is parallel with a metaphor set up in Hebrews 4:12

- 12 For the word of God is living and
active and sharper than any two-
edged sword, and piercing as far
as the division of soul and spirit,
of both joints and marrow, and
able to judge the thoughts and
intentions of the heart.

God's word is a logical sword, dividing truth from non-truth. It cleaves what is right from what is wrong, what is truth from what is falsehood. These truths, like the ones we have discussed involving the plan of God, must be rightly divided. We must strive to follow God's own character. Remember, God is light, and in Him there is no darkness. There are no grey areas. There is right

and there is wrong. There is good and there is bad. There is a Creator and there is a created. There is a Jew, a gentile, a man, a woman, a time, an age. All of these definitions can be found if we properly divide the word, using a divinely-prescribed *logical approach* to the Scriptures.

Grasping God's Plan: A Summation

In general terms, God's plan is vast, detailed, complex, consistent, precise, current, and underway. He has His own reasons to execute the plan, and is using it to bring about His stated goals. Specifically it is:

- A Grace Plan
- An Eternal Plan
- A Perfect Plan
- An Unfolding Plan
- A Progressive Plan
- A Dispensational plan

Perhaps the best news for all humanity is that we play a part in God's plan, as humans and as members of the Church (since, as believers, we live in this age and are awarded the present stewardship.)

A general grasp in hand, take a moment to contemplate God's plan, and the purpose of His plan. Better yet, take a minute to realize that by studying God's plan and reading this book, you are doing God's will (if in fellowship) and are helping to bring Glory to His Son, according to His wishes. By looking into the fathomless riches which will some day be summed up in Christ, you are aligning yourself with God's stated goals and objectives, becoming a being who can appreciate the Father's love for His Son, and ultimately executing His plan for your life.

Herein lies the justification for the above study, and the necessary motivation to dive further into the detailed events of God's plan as presented in Part 2.

Part Two:

GRAPHING GOD'S PLAN

God's Literal Truth

In order to properly graph God's plan, we must first take a step back and realize the simple definition of truth. Truth is what God *thinks*. Truth is what God *says*. Any truth we find in the universe is simply a reflection of God's character, or an expression of His being. There is no truth but God's truth. Likewise, nothing can be true apart from God's truth. God is light and in Him there is no darkness. Thus, God's truth is absolute and in it there are no falsehoods. It might seem backwards to have to say it, but the underlying reality is that when God says something, He means it, and if He means anything else, He'll let us know.

This point of view, when used to interpret the Bible, is called a "literal hermeneutic." As Bible believing Christians, we interpret the Bible literally from Genesis to Revelation. We take God at His Word, in every instance, no matter what. Then, if it seems there are times when He is speaking to us metaphorically or through an allegory, we can also accept those linguistic constructions, but only when the text tells us to. But when the text is straight forward, we accept its literal intent. For example: (Genesis 2: 21-22)

- 21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place.
- 22 The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

When God says He took a rib from Adam and used it to create Eve, we believe Him. We believe that God put Adam to sleep, removed his rib from his body,

and used that rib to create a new being, Eve. We believe this because it is the proper:

- grammatical
- contextual
- historical
- logical
- dispensational
- categorical

...interpretation of the written text. This process of biblical study is called “Hermeneutics”. It is a broad and complex study beyond our current focus, but it is the basis for how we study the Bible and the basis for our construction of dispensational thought.

“Well, what God is really saying here is that men and women were meant to be together. Over billions of years of evolution, He used the original man’s DNA as a springboard. After a few accidental mutations, the female of the species evolved. That’s what He really means.”

No, that is not what God means. God says what He means. Read the Genesis passage again, more slowly if you need to.

That is not to say that God doesn’t use allegories or metaphors to speak to us. But when He does so, He indicates that construction *in the text*. Without the proper literal hermeneutical directive, the human mind is free to extrapolate and creatively “interpret” the Bible to mean whatever it wants it to.

That is not our goal. Our goal is to take the Bible at its word, to graph out the milestones that God has revealed to us. Further, our goal is to rightly divide the Word, not only setting up sequences of time, but elevating the differences in **stewardly circumstances** that are so important to Biblical understanding.

Dispensations, differentiations, ages, times, stewardships, EVERYTHING must be **scriptural**. It must be a textual, logical entry in the revealed Word of God. There must be a chapter and verse for every assertion. Likewise, there must be a systemic way of aligning these assertions so that they become logical proofs. In graphing God’s Plan (a better title might be a study of the Doctrine of Dispensations) we will follow such a pattern. Each “milestone” will be listed, along with an explanation of its relevance to the timeline. Then, chapter and verse will be provided that help to solidify each marker as a proper demarcation of age, dispensation, stewardship, et al. In summation, we will list the ages and dispensations, with focus on the progression of God’s plan. The result will be an intricate look into the plan, purpose, and methodology of the universe’s greatest architect, God the Father.

How do we start this intricate study? Simple. We use the guideposts God gives us.

God has given us **Milestones**. Passages that logically apply not only to the book they are found within, but also to the Bible as a whole. The Bible tells the story from eternity past to eternity future. It tells the story of what happened before time, and what will happen after time is ended. Between these bookends, we can build a roadmap linking individual creations and their relevance to God’s plan en total. Thus, these roadmaps provide important boundaries between ages, times and stewardships. The finished study will give us the all-encompassing scope of God’s revealed plan, while always keeping in mind God’s end-game, the summation of all things in Christ and His subsequent glorification.

The importance of differentiation

If we remember the sequence revealed in our Genesis text, God created man, then woman, in that order. Logically, that means that man existed before woman did. Further, man is different from woman. Man is not a woman, and a woman is not a man. The two are specifically different creations.

In similar fashion, God set Abraham apart as the first **Jew**. He defines what a Jew is (as we will see in later Scripture) and He likewise defines what a **Gentile** is. Jews have their own identity. They have their own purposes and their own promises. They are a separate and unique race, and God is very clear about their roles and responsibilities. Jews are Jews, and are not Gentiles. Gentiles are Gentiles, and are likewise not Jews. These differences are very important and must never be ignored. To do so is to ignore the very integrity of God’s Word. More importantly, to do so is to ignore the genius of God’s plan and purpose. God is in the details, and the only way to understand the deeper things of God is to embrace and synthesize these details.

Why? Because God has a reason for everything! Men and women are different for a reason. Jews and Gentiles are different for a reason. Truth and falsehood are different for a reason. To begin to understand God’s differentiation is to begin to understand his purpose and plan for all of creation. Angels are different than Man. The earth is different from the heavens. The two realms of existence are different. But ultimately, in the end, all realms will be brought together and these differences will be used to glorify Christ in one grand summation.

Therefore, to begin to graph the plan of God, we will begin our study of certain Milestones that God has placed in Scripture. The setting of these milestones, and the differences they establish will further reveal to us the divine structure set forth in the Plan of God.

The Meaning of Milestones

A traditional milestone is used to express the distance between one thing and another. For us, Biblical milestones will perform the same function, but in many more dimensions. Milestones will help us set distances in time (ages), but will also set up differences in *stewardship*. An understanding of these two elements will serve us greatly as we move forward:

An age is a period of time.

A *dispensation* involves the element of *stewardship*.

We can name each age we have passed through, and each age to come, but we must pay careful attention to stewardship if we are to understand God's plan. The stewardship helps to set each age apart in terms of the progression, implementation, and operation of God's people.

οἰκονόμος (oikonomos)

Again the word means the manager of the household. For us, it means the responsible party for sharing the gospel, the group of humans responsible for the furtherance and communication of God's word. As dispensationalists, we claim that knowing God's responsible party during a particular age and set of circumstances are the key to discerning God's past and future plans.

Grasping God's Graph

As we embark together into the graphing of God's plan, it's time for you to make a decision. How are you going to grasp God's graph? For our part, we will provide you two things. As described, we will provide you with a number of biblical milestones. These markers will vary in terms of their relevance. Some are markers that are relevant to time and sequence. Other markers are relevant to environment, to stewardship, to authority. Each milestone will help you further understand God's intricate plan, and we will explain its relevance as best we can. Most importantly, we will provide you with the biblical Scripture that each milestone is based upon. This is a tedious and methodical study, but it is first and foremost an accurate account of the unfolded Scripture. (Also, we will provide you with a chart of all these relevant markers. Check the back of the book.)

You can take out the chart we have provided, or take out a blank piece of paper and graph it out yourself. If you choose this path, you may very well have to start over a few times. This exercise will be a good way to understand just how intricate and complex God's plan truly is.

In providing you with these milestones, we are staying consistent with God's own plan and purpose. Likewise, we are staying consistent with a structure

similar to that of Scripture itself. It is important to realize that not only is the Bible text absolutely true, it is absolutely **non-linear**. God is outside of time. He is helping us to paint in our minds a multi-dimensional picture. He is describing when something happened, who it happened to, and why it was relevant, but **He is not:**

- Revealing all the facts **in order**
- Revealing all the facts **to one person**
- Revealing all the facts **in one place at one time**

Revealed Scripture must be approached as one long, intricate logic puzzle, and the student of the Word must synthesize all the pieces and then put them together in a logical fashion. Biblical truths are revealed "here a little, there a little." So don't be surprised when we show when something happened in Genesis, then fill in details of the incident with Scripture found in Job or Revelation. All the details God has chosen to provide are relevant, but the marvelous integrity they reveal are reserved for those willing to take the time to learn how they all fit together.

Key milestones that establish the Alpha to Omega Overview.

There are certain biblical passages that are "milestones," providing vital assistance in diagramming the Plan of God from eternity past to eternity future.

You may have seen us talk about the Alpha and the Omega. These milestones are more than just the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. They are special boundaries set apart by Christ's own words in Revelation 22:13:

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

Christ is the first and the last. He is the beginning as the firstborn of all creation. He is the end of all things as well. From the point of view of our study, these two events are our eternal "bookends." The birth of Christ's humanity and Christ's return of all things to the Father determine the entirety of temporal existence. So when we mention the Alpha and Omega, we are simply saying "the beginning and ending of time."

Whereas we could start from beginning of time to the end of time, we will instead start our graph in relevant context our study of the Plan of God. Since God's plan is designed to bring about an age where His Son is glorified to the maximum, we will set our first milestone as He would. We will look forward, as He is looking forward, to the ultimate culmination of God the Father's plan and purpose.

Milestone: Fullness of times.

Relevance: God’s end game, the period of time He is moving *toward* with all of creation as the basic elements. Shows us where time ends and where those alive in Christ will be transferred to a state of Eternity.

We know that God has a purpose, *to glorify Christ*. And He will accomplish this feat at a specified time. How do we know? Did we make this event up? Did we decide when it happens? Has it already happened and we missed it?

No. The details are explained by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians (1:9-10).

- 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him
- 10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.

God has planned all events with this one event in view. Hence, this is an important milestone. This is God’s overall objective. This is the end game. Whatever came before, whatever comes after, this is the point of order. We are currently working toward this happening. It is why we have time in the first place. It is why we exist at all. It has not happened yet, but it will happen, and we will know it has happened when it happens.

Things happened before this, things will happen after this, but this is God’s line in the sand. It is the milestone that best reveals His overall purpose, His reason for all creation.

Simply stated:

The coming of the “fullness of times” is God’s reason for all temporal existence.

If you want a good way to start answering “why”, you can start by highlighting the last sentence. It is God’s great summation in Christ. It is only after the fullness of times has taken place that we are then transferred by Christ to a state of eternity.

So now that we’ve seen the end of time, let’s go back before the beginning.

Milestone: Eternal Life Conference

Relevance: Sets the stage for time. Reveals the roles God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit take on in executing the Plan of God.

If the fullness of times is the end game, then the Eternal Life Conference is the Pre-game. As indicated by the Scriptures, God planned everything out before He made it happen. We see the principle laid out in the continuance of our last passage (Ephesians 1:10-11)

- 10 ...In Him
- 11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

The key word in that passage is “counsel.” It indicates that all three members of the Trinity got together in eternity past and had a meeting. God the Father had a love for Christ that was special. We have already studied that in other texts. Motivated by this love, God the Father planned out a course of action. God the Son (Jesus Christ in His deity) accepted the plan, and submitted Himself to obey the Father’s plan. The Holy Spirit also agreed to the plan, but through a subservient role. This relationship of Father to Son, with perfect love and obedience, is the recurring theme of all Scripture and is the motivational “Why” of God’s plan.

Milestone: Hypostatic Union

Relevance: The first creative act in all history. Shows us likely when time began. Also gives us details about the humanity of Christ and His role in creation.

Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, meaning He brought all things into existence and will take His bride back into eternity at the end of time. With Him in view, we use this Milestone to set up our alpha, or the beginning of time: (Proverbs 8:22-31)

- 22 “The Lord possessed (begat) me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old.

This milestone sets up what is called by theologians as the “hypostatic union”, when Christ was begotten in His humanity by the Father, and forever joined to the deity of God the Son. It is a unique event, and not until we are raised in glory with Him can we even begin to understand the complexity of it, but there it is all the same.

After the Eternal Life Conference where the plan was agreed upon, at some point that plan was put into action. This was the first step in God's plan, and the first creative act ever. At the very first point of time itself, Jesus' humanity was "birthed," and He became the God-Man. He was always God, a member of the Trinity with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, but His humanity was not eternal. Christ's humanity had a beginning, a fixed point at which it happened and He was brought into existence by God the Father.

But wasn't Jesus born on Earth by Mary?

Yes, He was, but His humanity was birthed by God as the very first act of creation. Why would we claim this? It just makes things more complicated. We claim it because it is in the Scripture:

- 23 "From everlasting I was
established, From the beginning,
from the earliest times of the earth.
- 24 "When there were no depths I was
brought forth, (birthed.) When
there were no springs abounding
with water.
- 25 "Before the mountains were settled,
Before the hills I was brought forth;
- 26 While He had not yet made the
earth and the fields, Nor the first
dust of the world.
- 27 "When He established the heavens,
I was there, When He inscribed a
circle on the face of the deep,
- 28 When He made firm the
skies above,
When the springs of the deep
became fixed,
- 29 When He set for the sea
its boundary
So that the water would not
transgress His command, When
He marked out the foundations of
the earth;
- 30 Then I was beside Him, as a
master workman;
And I was daily His delight,
Rejoicing always before Him,
- 31 Rejoicing in the world, His earth,

And having my delight in the sons
of men.

There is no other "I" who could make the claims made in this text. Clearly, this event portrays the hypostatic union of God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. True humanity and undiminished Deity united forever in the Person of Christ. The Father's "begetting" of the "only begotten Son," the firstborn of all creation. This fact is further illuminated in Colossians. (Col. 1:13-15)

- 13 For He rescued us from the
domain of darkness, and
transferred us to the kingdom of
His beloved Son,
- 14 in whom we have redemption, the
forgiveness of sins.
- 15 He is the image of the invisible
God, the firstborn of all creation.

So if we have a graph of time, we now have a solid understanding of sequence. There was a past eternity we call *eternity* past. During that time, we have evidence that God had a conference with the Son and the Holy Spirit. During this "eternal life conference" God laid out the plan to glorify Christ. Christ agreed to submit to the plan, and the Holy Spirit followed suit. Then we have the "birth" of Christ's hypostatic union. Since Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, we can assume that time started at this point of created existence. Therefore we have the beginning of our basic sequence:

eternity past – time – eternity future.

Likewise, we have a sequence that relates to our study, God's plan. That sequence has:

eternity past – eternal life conference – Christ's hypostatic union – creation of all things – the fullness of times – the end of times.

How do we know that all things were created after Christ's humanity? It's next in the Scripture: (Col. 1:16-19)

- 16 For by Him all things were created,
both in the heavens and on earth,
visible and invisible, whether
thrones or dominions or rulers or
authorities—all things have been
created through Him and for Him.

- 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.
- 18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.
- 19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,

This makes it pretty clear that not only does Christ precede all creation, but that He, Himself is the active agent of creation, the one executing His Father's plan.

This is a good time to step back for a moment. Take a look at the paper you have drawn, or the chart provided. We have already mapped out eternity past and future, with time in the middle. We have seen the Humanity of Christ linked to the deity of Christ, and have indicated that He then creates all things and that through Him all things are created, (likewise there are no things that are created that He didn't create.)

There are no grey areas, no mumbo jumbo, no blind faith. This is the logical sequence of events that took place before man or angels were even created. We also see a time in the future, where all things are related to Christ, and are therefore fit to be returned to the state of eternity. With this small picture in view, you are already more educated than the greatest of secular scientists the world has ever spawned. You know already the sequence of the space-time continuum, and the bigger mystery, WHY all these things were created in the first place. That's a lot to digest. Take a minute and let it sink in.

Now, we move forward.

Milestone: Universal Creation

Relevance: Establishes a sequence of creative events, while also explaining authority and the beginnings of ages and dispensations. Genesis 1:1-2

- 1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
- 2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

This is a pretty straightforward milestone, but it presents a very interesting challenge. If read from the perspective that is the only Scripture we have on creation, then it would seem that God created the heavens and earth as shapeless bodies of formless void. We would accept that as the case, if that were, in fact, all the information we had.

Fortunately, we have other Scriptures that force us to re-consider the way we read this passage. Is this passage a linear, play-by-play description of everything that happened in creation? Not necessarily. This text is written with the focus on the creation of man and his story. Therefore, it has all the relevant information *from that perspective* and *to that end*.

Now consider also the fact that God is outside of time, and does not always stay in sequence. In Genesis, God includes details relevant to the immediate focus of the text (the creation and story of Man). Consider that He does not, in Genesis, include the sequence of all Genetic events. Since Genetic focus is on the creation of the heavens and earth and eventually the creation of Man, it's obvious that the angelic creation is not presently in view. Thus, the details relevant to the angelic creation are not included in this passage.

But just because events happening in the angelic realm don't appear here, doesn't mean they aren't happening!

Consider the Bible to be a straight ruler, by which all these events of history are laid out. Therefore, while we look at the creation of the Universe (Gen 1:1) as the one inch mark, and then the Earth being formless and void (Gen 1:2) as the two inch mark, isn't it also possible that things happened between inch one and inch two? In fact, if we look closely at the text, there are certain "gaps" that cannot be taken lightly if we are to truly understand God's Word.

Let's look closely at Genesis 1:1

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

In the beginning (*when this all occurred*)

God created the heavens...and the earth

Now we might just read through this quickly and assume that these two events happened at the same time. But did they? Not according to Job!

Let's look in Job 38. (1-7)

- 1 Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said,
- 2 "Who is this that darkens counsel
By words without knowledge?
- 3 "Now gird up your loins like a man,
And I will ask you, and you
instruct Me!
- 4 "Where were you when I laid the
foundation of the earth?
Tell Me, if you have understanding,
- 5 Who set its measurements? Since
you know.
Or who stretched the line on it?
- 6 "On what were its bases sunk?
Or who laid its cornerstone,
- 7 When the morning stars sang
together And all the sons of God
shouted for joy?

God is letting Job know who **Job** is, who **God** is, and who **Job is not**. But beyond this, we see a glimpse of what was happening at the creation of the earth. These are some supporting details that help to fill in the gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. Look at verse 7 again:

- 7 When the morning stars sang
together And all the sons of God
shouted for joy?

All the Sons of God shouted for Joy? Were these morning stars **men**? Was Job there?

No. That's the point of God's sarcastic question. Job wasn't there. No men were. Adam had not been created yet. We see him later in Genesis. No, these Sons of God are **angels**, and this is clear evidence that the Angels were present at the creation of the earth.

So sequentially, we know that there were angels present at the creation. SO...

If God created the heavens
And God created the earth,
But The angels were witnesses to the creation of the earth
Then The creation of the heavens and the earth did not happen
at the same time!

The Angels had to be created first so they could then witness the creation of the earth. Thus we see a pattern of scriptural revelation. God is telling a story that happens in different realms, but during the same time. He doesn't put all the details together for us sequentially, it's up to us to read the entirety of Scripture and find these details. It is necessary that we understand this "line upon line, precept upon precept" concept early. It is prevalent in all the books of the Bible, and without going through this sequence-synthesis, it is impossible to make logical sense of God's Word.

So let's not stop there. We now know that God created the heavens, THEN he created the earth. Next in sequence, Genesis has another "gap" we need to understand.

In Gen 1:1, we have

In the beginning, God created the
heavens and the earth.

Then in Genesis 1:2, we have:

and the earth was formless and void.

Are we supposed to assume that the earth was formed formless and void? Doesn't that sound like a contradiction?

Yes, it does, and it is a major stumbling block to many people who question the Bible's internal integrity. But if we continue with the understanding that God provides additional details in other books, we can fill in this gap with God's own words.

If we take into account *logical statements in other parts of Scripture*, we are forced to re-visit Genesis. We must consider the fact that events transpired between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2.

In Genesis 1:2, the earth is described as formless and void. Could the earth have been created in this fashion? Formless and void? It could have, God can do anything He wants, but other Scriptures describe God differently. We must take this passage from Isaiah into consideration: Isaiah 45:18

For thus says the Lord, who created
the heavens (He is the God who formed
the earth and made it, He established it
and did not create it a waste place, but
formed it to be inhabited),

So if we align these Scriptures together, we have a logical argument started. Can the Scripture say two contradictory statements that are both true? No, the Bible does not contradict itself. It simply provides *complementary* information. Information we can then use to build longer, more complex arguments and sequences.

Isaiah tells us that God did create the Earth, but that He did not form it as a waste place. It seems something must have happened to make the earth formless and void. What could have happened? Who could we ask? Who else was there?

Well we have already established that the Angels pre-existed the creation of the earth. They were there singing about it, so angels had to be there. Is the answer within that gap between the earth being created (Gen 1:1) and the earth being formless and void (Gen. 1:2)? Did somebody *do something* to make the earth formless and void? Hmm, maybe the angels (or one particular angel) had something to do with it?

Let's look in Jeremiah (4:23-26):

- 23 I looked on the earth, and behold, it was formless and void; And to the heavens, and they had no light.
- 24 I looked on the mountains, and behold, they were quaking, And all the hills moved to and fro.
- 25 I looked, and behold, there was no man, And all the birds of the heavens had fled.
- 26 I looked, and behold, the fruitful land was a wilderness, And all its cities were pulled down Before the Lord, before His fierce anger.

The Hebrew words found here in this passage in Jeremiah are (תהו וָבֹהוּ) “tohu wabohu” meaning *formless* and *void*. Now if we look closely at these words, they are identical to the words to describe the earth Genesis 1:2. What does that tell us? It tells us that this could be related Scripture. These two passages use the same words, and could be talking about the same period of time, but from different points of view and with different realms of creation as the focus. Jeremiah is speaking about a time where there was:

- A formless and void earth
- No light in the heavens

- Quaking mountains
- No heavenly birds (scattered away, but once there)
- A once fruitful land, now wilderness
- Cities pulled down because of God's anger

Can this passage be giving us additional detailed information about the conditions of the Earth in Genesis 1:1-2?

Yes! And just look at the details it gives us about the life of the angels **before** the creation of man! There was once a fruitful land? There were once cities? These are all very interesting points, but they are most valuable as elements that help us paint a picture of what happened in between Gen. 1:1 and 2. What happened? Why was the earth formless and void? Let's look at our list of events and arguments:

God created the Heavens	(Gen. 1:1)
The angels were there to see the creation of the earth.	(Job 38:7)
God created the Earth	(Gen. 1:1)
God did not create the earth formless and void	(Isa. 45:18)
But the earth was formless and void	(Gen. 1:2)
Moreover, it was in a state of ill repair	(Jer. 4:23)

So according to our argument, something made earth become formless and void. Perhaps this is an important milestone?

Milestone: The Fall of Satan

Relevance: Explains the destruction of original Earth. Origination of fallen angels. Sets up the “Seed of the Woman” promise.

To find more about what the destructive events between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, we can jump all the way to the last book of the Bible, the Revelation (12:3-4).

The Red Dragon, Satan:

- 3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems.
- 4 And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. ...

John sees a dragon. The word has been used so many times for Satan, it's even in the chapter title. Satan is also known as the *serpent*, the *morning star*, even the *king of Tyre*. So the dragon is Satan. What is his intent?

... And the dragon stood before
the woman who was about to give
birth, so that when she gave birth
he might devour her child.

Satan's intent is clear. He stands before the woman about to give birth in the hopes of devouring her child. Who is this woman? Who is this child? Genesis has the answer: (Gen 3: 13-15)

- 13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, "what is this you have done?" And the woman said, "the serpent deceived me, and I ate."
- 14 The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life;
- 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel."

This promise made by God is called the "Seed of the Woman" promise. It is a promise made by God that the woman will have a child and that Satan will bruise him, but will be eventually crushed by "the seed." The seed here is Christ Himself, and the whole scene that John is witnessing is showing him a myriad of events.

God's focus in Revelation is the entire story of Satan, his fall, his intention to stop Christ from going to the cross, and his eventual destruction and deliverance to the lake of fire. You see the whole picture? It comes from many angles and must be put together, but it is logically achieved with the help of the Holy Spirit. In Genesis, God is telling us about the creation of the heavens and earth with Man as the focus. In Revelation, He likewise tells us about what was happening in the angelic realm leading up to and including Genetic events.

We have to put them all in relevant sequence to tell the whole story. Another passage provides important additional context for the fall of "Heylel ben Shachar" and his angels. John saw Satan's tail sweeping a third of all the stars of heaven. What happened? (Isaiah. 14:12-14)

- 12 "How you have fallen from heaven,
O star of the morning, son of the
dawn! You have been cut down to
the earth, you who have weakened
the nations!
- 13 "But you said in your heart,
'I will ascend to heaven;
I will raise my throne above the
stars of God, and I will sit on the
mount of assembly In the recesses
of the north.
- 14 'I will ascend above the heights of
the clouds; I will make myself like
the Most High.'

So if we put these pieces together, we see that Satan was once in heaven. At some point, God found sin in him, the sin of pride, ascribing glory to himself above that of God. (Ezekiel 28:15-17b)

- 15 "You were blameless in your ways
From the day you were created
Until unrighteousness was found
in you.
- 16 "By the abundance of your trade
you were internally filled with
violence, and you sinned;
therefore I have cast you as
profane From the mountain of
God. And I have destroyed you, O
covering cherub, from the midst of
the stones of fire.
- 17 "Your heart was lifted up because
of your beauty; You corrupted your
wisdom by reason of your splendor.
I cast you to the ground;

When he sinned, he was cast out of heaven, and he took one third of the stars of heaven with him, according to our past passage from Revelation. Thus, all

of these elements are coming together to paint the picture. You have heavens and earth created, the creation of Angels and Satan. The Fall of Satan and the subsequent fall of one-third of all the angels, and you have Satan setting himself up as a counterfeit father in opposition to God the Father. It's the beginning of the angelic conflict, the beginning of rebellion in the universe, and it's all happening between Gen 1:1 and 2!

What's really sad about the whole thing is that Satan was once a beautiful and powerful creature, arguably the **most powerful and beautiful creature of all creation**. God Himself laments the whole series of events. (Ezekiel 28:12-14, 17c, 19)

- 12 "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, thus says the Lord God, "you had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
13 "You were in Eden, the garden of God;

This is describing a time before man, and before the state of "tohu wabohu (תְּהוֹ וְבוֹהוּ)." It is a time where Satan was still in God's favor. In Eden, but before the fall:

- Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you. On the day that you were created They were prepared.
14 "You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.
17c I put you before kings, that they may see you.

Horns and tail aside, Satan is described as a loved and anointed creature, one completely at home with God, on His holy mountain. But then:

- 18 "By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade you profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; It has consumed you, and I have turned you to ashes on the earth In the eyes of all who see you.
19 "All who know you among the peoples Are appalled at you; You have become terrified And you will cease to be forever.""

So the first recorded sin in history, the cause of the destruction of the earth into a state for "tohu wabohu," is Satan's fall and the fall of one third of the angels with him. Satan, claimed that he would ascend to heaven, raise his own throne, and become like the Most High. He filled himself with pride because of his power, money and beauty, and he asserts that he is better than God. Sound familiar?

Let's re-visit our argument:

God created the heavens	(Gen. 1:1)
The angels were there to see the creation of the earth.	(Job 38:7)
God created the earth	(Gen. 1:1)
God did not create the earth <i>formless and void</i>	(Isa. 45:18)
But the earth was <i>formless and void</i>	(Gen. 1:2)
Moreover, it was in a state of ill repair	(Jer. 4:23)

So why was the earth *formless and void*?

Satan (a beautiful angel)	(Ezek. 28:12)
Who was in Eden prior to Man	(Ezek. 28:12)
Fell (brought sin into the universe)	(Ezek. 28:18)
By making sinful declarations	(Isaiah 14:12)
And was cast out of heaven, to the earth	(Isaiah 14:16)
Taking a third of the angels with him	(Rev. 12:3)
Subjecting the earth to God's wrath	(Jer. 4:23-26)

And how does this relate to Man?

Subsequently, Satan (the serpent) opposed God's plan	(Gen. 3:1)
Satan tempted Eve	(Gen. 3:5)
Satan was cursed,	(Gen. 3:14)
Setting up the Seed of the Woman promise	(Gen. 3:15)

- So, God created the universe, **not** *formless and void*, but wonderful with angelic Edenic cities prosperous with trade and a plentiful environment.
- Then, *sin* was found in **Satan**.
- and God's **judgment** of that *sin* caused the universe to be left in a state of (תְּהוֹ וְבֹהוּ) "tohu wabohu"
- Then, God saw fit to restore the universe, and He details that restoration throughout Genesis 1.

Milestone: The Creation of Man

Relevance: Sequence in creation, but also importance of Man over the angels (after resurrection). Also authority of Man over the Earth.

Before God created Man, He gave it some thought:

- 26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."
- 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Now notice that this is Genesis 1:26-27. The actual creation of man is then recorded in Genesis 2. How can this be? Did God create man twice?

No, it's just another example of how the Bible will tell a story with one focus, then fill in more details from another focus later. The fact that God created Man in His own image is a fact stated with the focus on the relationship between man and God. This declaration establishes the importance of man in creation (angels might be above us in terms of capable super-spirit bodies right now, but they are not created in the image of God, only humans are.) God's focus is not sequence here, but Godly distinction. We are creations that mirror His image. Moreover, we have authority over the earth: (Genesis 1:28).

- 28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and

over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Man and Woman are to subdue and rule over the earth. The importance here is that men are not merely animals, and animals are not living shades of humanity. They are two distinct creations. The same thing can be said about humans and angels. The two are separate creations. We do not become angels when we die, we do not sprout wings and take on an angelic body.

We are *unique entities*, a copy of the *Lord Jesus Christ's own humanity*, and that is of special significance. For example, it is why we are not to commit homicide, as doing so destroys an image of God. It is also why we do not commit suicide, or suicide bombings, for the same reason.

Returning to the current milestone, the writer of Genesis (Moses, with inspiration from the Holy Spirit) returns to the event in Chapter 2. Complementary details are listed in Chapter 2, including:

- God formed man (Gen. 2:7)
- Planted him a Garden (in Eden) (Gen. 2:8)
- Told him about the Tree of Good and Evil (Gen. 2:16)
- Sent him out to name the animals, (Gen. 2:19)
- He realized that there was no suitable "helper" or mate for him (Gen. 2:20)
- So God formed Eve from Adam's own flesh. (Gen. 2:21)

So from a biblical perspective, God created the Earth for Man, in His very likeness, then created woman from man. He did not create a soupy green goo then wait 1,000,000,000 years to see that goo mutate from life-form to life-form until humans evolved and one day realized that they were different from each other. Not according to God's Word.

We make the above point in reference to some who try and use the Genesis 1:1 to Genesis 1:2 gap (or "gap theory") as a way to synthesize the biblical account of creation and the modern theory of evolution. This is not a proper application of the doctrine. The biblical and evolutionary explanations cannot logically be synthesized or reconciled and we reject any such attempt to do so.

Dispensations: Where We Are

We have covered a lot of ground. We have seen events happening before time, in time, and after time. Let's get a dispensational look at what we have already covered, *in order*, so we can see the logical progress God has revealed up to this point in our study.

When we say dispensations, we infer that there is biblical information revealed

to particular existing beings during prescribed times, and that those beings have a special responsibility to know, impart, and obey that revealed information.

In **eternity past**, we saw:

- Eternal Life Fellowship
- Eternal Life Conference
- Divine Decrees (God decided what He would do then did it)

Most people don't consider that period a dispensation, because it was not in time, and due to the lack of created finite beings. Stewardship, as a concept, was not yet necessary.

Dispensation of Alpha (creative ages):

- Begetting of Christ in his Humanity
- Creation of Heavens
- Creation of Heavenly Host
- Creation of Earth

During this Dispensation, God the Son, in His Hypostatic union, was the Steward of God's Word. He was revealing it through creation, as every created being reflects in some fashion God's word and God's character.

Dispensation of Angels:

- Placement and Service
- Rebellion and Warfare
- Judgment/Destruction of Earth

In this dispensation, God places the responsibilities for knowing His Word on the angels, and for the first time, onto created beings. We do not know how much information was provided, for we know that the continued study of the Word is something that angels still long to look into. But we do know that God had at least set up communication. The angels knew the rules, and Satan chose to disobey those rules, and was subsequently dislodged from his seat in heaven down to the earth below. This action sets up the future conflicts between the angelic realm and the human realm as we will soon see.

Dispensation of Man

- Restoration of Earth/Creation of Man
- Age of Innocence
- Age of Conscience
- Age of Human Government

In the dispensation of man, we see his creation, then we will see his first experience with Satan, his fall and exile from Eden, and the beginning of his dispersal across the whole earth. We also see Noah, Job, the great flood, and the repopulation of the earth with the promise of no more whole-earth-hydro-cataclysm.

The above dispensational sequence is put together by graphing out all of the milestones we have discussed, going back and forth through the Scriptures to find logical events, logical characters, and the meanings behind each of the interactions of God, angels, humans, and their environments.

Please Note:

- Dispensations are based on stewardship, on **who** is in charge of God's word
- Ages are categorized distances of time, and are separate from the dispensational details within.

This will become even more important as we move forward in the dispensational outline. Stewardships will eventually shift on a different schedule than ages. It is only possible to understand the reasons for these shifts if we separate our definitions of *dispensations* and *ages* early on.

Milestone: The Fall of Man

Relevance: Introduction of sin and evil on the earth. Beginning events of the angelic conflict. Beginning of human stewardship responsibilities.

Man is created innocent, perfect, with no knowledge of sin. Further, we are inside Adam genetically during this time. Every ounce of human DNA is alive and well within the body of Adam. In a sense, he is everyman, and our father to boot. What he does will affect us all through all time. What we do with the knowledge he passes down in the Scripture will affect us for all eternity.

Now let's get some ground rules for stewardship, beginning in Gen 2:16-17:

- 16 The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;
- 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

God is setting up human stewardship. He is imparting the Word of God to Adam through words, thoughts, and speech. His directions are very clear.

Adam can eat anything in the garden except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Is this a magic tree? Does this tree really possess the power to infect Adam's brain with new knowledge? Is the answer in the fruit itself?

Clearly, God is setting up boundaries, just like ones He may have set up in angelic times before Eden. He is saying that we should obey His Word, or there will be consequences. Remember, Adam was created sinless. He had never even imagined what it would be like if he were to defy God's directive. Sin was, at that time, a concept foreign to man.

Christ was in the garden, instructing Adam and Eve as to the relevance of the Tree of Good and Evil. Christ is the one executing God's plan. So by obeying Christ, Adam had a chance to glorify Christ with a proper decision. Unfortunately, this wasn't the sequence of events. But Adam wasn't alone in his decision. Satan had already made his decision about whether or not to rebel against God's Word. He was right there to help: (Genesis 3:1-6)

- 1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"
- 2 The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;
- 3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.' "
- 4 The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!
- 5 "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
- 6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit

and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

This is Adam's first sin. This is our first sin too. We may not have been there, but God knew that eventually, every one of us (as finite beings) would have made the same mistake. We were in Adam genetically, so we all suffer the consequences of his original Sin. From that point on, all of humanity (all who have a human father) are born in a state of Sin, separated from God. (Genesis 3:7)

- 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

Something was different. Yet, they were not dead. Didn't God say "Surely, you will die?" Yet they lived! Satan was right!

Something did die that day. It was Adam's spirit. Eve's too. The penalty for sin was the death of their human spirits, their living communicative connections to God the Father. But Adam and Eve, in their bodies, did not die. Not immediately. But the process of mortality and death had its beginnings there. Humans were now in a new age, the age of conscience. (Genesis 3:8-13)

- 8 They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.
- 9 Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"
- 10 He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."
- 11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"
- 12 The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate."

13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Adam was suddenly cold and afraid. He was separated from God for the first time. This is an age we can all understand, it is an age we have all experienced, is it not? We are all born separated from God, spiritually dead, just like Adam is right here in the Scripture. It is only when we accept the reconciliation that Christ provides that we can be saved, our spirits resurrected, i.e. *born again*.

We can make some important milestones from this passage as we read along, but let's make special reference to 1) *the Seed of the Woman*, and 2) *the act Christ performs to solve the couples' nakedness*: (Genesis 3:14-15)

14 The Lord God said to the serpent,
"Because you have done this,
Cursed are you more than all
cattle, And more than every beast
of the field; On your belly you will
go, And dust you will eat
All the days of your life;

Satan is transformed here, and the snake pays the price as well.

15 And I will put enmity Between you
and the woman, And between your
seed and her seed;

God puts a divinely inspired dislike between Satan, humans, and snakes as well, for all time.

He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on
the heel."

This is a very important promise. It is not merely a reference to the killing of snakes (a prophecy that is fulfilled regularly if my wife sees them, I assure you). It is a reference to the *Seed of the Woman*, a human, born to the woman, with no mention of the man. It is also a promise that the Seed (child) will suffer injury, but will obliterate the snake's head.

This is one of the greatest promises in all of Scripture. It is a promise that God Himself, through the birth of a sinless child (not having Adam's genetic sins,) would settle the angelic conflict, crushing Satan in defeat. This promise cannot

be taken lightly. It is in essence the prophecy that Christ would come and suffer on the cross under the hand of Satan, but then would crush the adversary in Glory. It is also an important promise because it sets up a direct *lineage*.

From this point on we can track the lineage of Christ, starting with Eve and moving through Scripture. It's simple right now, Eve, then Seth, then Enosh, Keenan *et al*. But remarkably, over thousands of years of biblical time, you can actually trace Jesus' bloodline all the way through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David, all the way to Mary. This promise, and its subsequent solution, is one of the greatest answered prophecies in all of Scripture. It culminates in Christ's death and ascension, the key milestones cited in the defeat of sin and the execution of redemption in time. (Genesis 3:16-21)

16 To the woman He said, "I will
greatly multiply your pain in
childbirth, in pain you will bring
forth children; Yet your desire will
be for your husband,
And he will rule over you."

17 Then to Adam He said, "Because
you have listened to the voice of
your wife, and have eaten from the
tree about which I commanded
you, saying, 'you shall not eat from
it'; Cursed is the ground because
of you; In toil you will eat of it
All the days of your life.

18 "Both thorns and thistles it shall
grow for you; And you will eat the
plants of the field;

19 By the sweat of your face
you will eat bread, till you return
to the ground, because from it you
were taken; For you are dust,
and to dust you shall return."

Not a fun existence, but an excellent prophecy of life on earth.

20 Now the man called his wife's
name Eve, because she was the
mother of all the living.

21 The Lord God made garments of
skin for Adam and his wife, and
clothed them.

Here is the passage I mentioned earlier. It pertains to Adam's nakedness, but it further helps us to paint a picture. God uses pictures to train people in their understanding of doctrine. It is a picture we will see again when the Jews come along.

What happens here exactly? Adam and Eve made themselves some clothes out of leaves, but that's not good enough. Christ Himself makes clothes for them that are suitable. Does He breathe new clothes into existence? Does He take cotton and rayon and form a nice suit for Adam? Does He spin silk for a nice sundress for Eve?

No. Christ made garments of *skin* for Adam and Eve. He killed animals, skinned them, and gave them to His creations. Why did He do this?

This is our first picture of *Salvation*, and it is carefully planned by God. Salvation is not of our own works. It is not by the death of plants, and it is not without cost. Plainly, for sins to be paid for, something truly alive has to die. Most importantly, for the remission of sin, **blood must be shed**. There is no other acceptable substitute.

So is Christ forgiving Adam and Eve at this point in time? Not yet. What He is doing is setting up this picture. This **prophecy**. *A prophecy He will later fulfill by His own death on the cross*. This reality is further advanced for Abraham and Isaac but even before that it is referenced by the treatment of Cain. (Genesis 4:3-5)

- 3 So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground.
- 4 Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering;
- 5 but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

The Lord did not accept Cain's offering of fruits. They were not suitable! What is suitable for the remission of sin? What picture is God starting to paint to show us what we need to do to be saved? We must *wear the bloodied skin*. We must bring Him a sacrifice of value, a living sacrifice. God is conceptually painting a picture of the only acceptable way of salvation, a milestone that will occur hundreds of years in the future:

A bloodied Christ on the cross, paying the penalty for sin as our substitute.

Milestone: The Flood of Noah, the further corruption of Man.

Relevance: Tells of the condition of pre-flood earth. Sets up another picture of salvation. A dramatic event that give us a clear demarcation of time. (Genesis 6-8)

- 1 Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them,
- 2 that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.
- 3 Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."
- 4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.
- 5 Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

These events track a simple continuation of the angelic conflict. It's clearly Satan's direct attack on the *Seed of the Woman* promise. Remember, the eventual destroyer of the serpent must be the Seed of the Woman. But what do we see happening here? We see Sons of God (fallen angels) coming down to earth and making babies with human women. We see them producing hybrid angel/humans, who turn out to be "men of great renown." What Satan is trying to do here is taint the gene pool. If he can infect the "Seed of the Woman" with angelic DNA, perhaps he can thwart God's plan. Consider the fact that if Satan can keep God's promises from taking place, even by the slightest amount, he can alter God's plan, thus making himself like God and proving his ability against the Almighty.

- 6 The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.
- 7 The Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them."

We would be remiss here if we did not address this section in detail.

It's easy to say "Well, clearly here's an upset God changing His mind. Doesn't sound very perfectly planned to me."

As we have always said, the Bible must be taken logically and literally, but with no contradictions. This may seem to be a true contradiction, but it is not. What is really being presented here is a glimpse into God's character. Moreover, into His very being.

God is sovereign. He is truth, justice, love, righteousness. He is omnipotent, and omniscient. All of the parts of His essence are completely equal and eternal. Likewise, He cannot violate any part of His essence, ever! We know this from consistent study of passages throughout the Bible. But what we have happening here is a particular statement that forces us to see God as a person. And a very special kind of person at that.

God knew the end from the beginning, and all creation is a part of His plan. But with all that being said, He still takes the time to express to us His feelings. God is a feeling, cognizant being. He knew that creating beings with free will would be costly. He knew that saving them would be costly. But even though God knew of these eventualities, He proceeded with His plan anyway. God has put forth a **process**, and even though it **pains** Him, it accomplishes His **purpose**. He knew this point in time would come, as He had foreseen it in eternity past. By using this language of accommodation, God effectively shows us that He does have feelings, and knows what is right and wrong. He is incensed by evil, and is by His own confession a jealous God (*jealous meaning having righteous indignation.*)

Thus, by merely saying that He was saddened by the actions of fallen Man, God certainly does not disprove His foreknowledge, divert His plan, or violate any part of His essence. Most assuredly, it is certainly not painting God as a fickle being, flying in the face of an abundance of recorded Scripture. God was

saddened by the event. He recorded that sadness. We accept it as written. We know it is possible for us to be saddened, for us to feel a sense of regret. Why not Him? *Are we not created in His image?*

But beyond the failings of most fallen man, there was one sinner who didn't completely fail: (Genesis 6:8-13)

- 8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.
- 9 These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God.
- 10 Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.
- 11 Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence.
- 12 God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.
- 13 Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.

We claim here that Noah and his family were the last of the untainted humans on the earth. Fallen angels had begun mating with human women, not only for their own gratification, but in order to hamper the Seed of the Woman promise. We don't know how many humans there were, but only Noah and his family were still fully human. But God is about to unleash His wrath: (Genesis 6:14-17)

- 14 "Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch.
- 15 "This is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.

- 16 "You shall make a window for the ark, and finish it to a cubit from the top; and set the door of the ark in the side of it; you shall make it with lower, second, and third decks.
- 17 "Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish.

And here we have another milestone, a covenant pronounced by God. It's different than a promise, it's a direct, verifiable, and law-abiding contract between God and Man, and it will be the first of a pattern that God will forge with a particular people soon to be described. (Genesis 6:18-22)

- 18 "But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you.
- 19 "And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female.
- 20 "Of the birds after their kind, and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every kind will come to you to keep them alive.
- 21 "As for you, take for yourself some of all food which is edible, and gather it to yourself; and it shall be for food for you and for them."
- 22 Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.

We call it the Noahic covenant, the first in a series, and we claim that God made good, saving Noah and all his family, using them to later repopulate the earth with pure humanity.

Milestone: The Flood

Relevance: Shows complete destruction of the earth, yet salvation for Noah and his family. Continuation of the Seed of the Woman promise, and the Noahic covenant.

Noah was told by God that He was going to bring rain upon the earth to destroy it. Rain had never fallen before, so Noah was perplexed. Nevertheless, Noah followed God's instructions (as any good steward would). (Genesis 7:15-20)

- 15 So they went into the ark to Noah, by twos of all flesh in which was the breath of life.
- 16 Those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as God had commanded him; and the Lord closed it behind him.
- 17 Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days, and the water increased and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the earth.
- 18 The water prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water.
- 19 The water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered.
- 20 The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered.

All the mountains were covered by water, the entire earth underwater for 40 days. But why? To what end? (Genesis 7:21-24)

- 21 All flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind;
- 22 of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died.
- 23 Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of

the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark.

24 The water prevailed upon the earth one hundred and fifty days.

God kills everything but Noah and his family, thus preserving true humanity and providing a lineage to fulfill the Seed of the Woman promise. Take that Satan! Without changing His plan one iota, God executes His plan for salvation and provides yet another picture of the salvation to come through Christ.

So Noah and his family leave the ark, and God sets His bow in the clouds as a testament to His Covenant, that it will not be broken. The story continues after the family leaves the ark. As always, God continues to record lineage: (Genesis 9:18-23, 25-27)

18 Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth; and Ham was the father of Canaan.

19 These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.

Then, a strange event happens:

20 Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard.

21 He drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent.

22 Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.

23 But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness.

The actual sin revealed here is not entirely clear, but the effects are:

25 So he said, "Cursed be Canaan;
A servant of servants
He shall be to his brothers."

26 He also said, "Blessed be the Lord,
The God of Shem; And let
Canaan be his servant.

27 "May God enlarge Japheth,
And let him dwell in the tents
of Shem; And let Canaan be
his servant."

This passage is possibly a milestone in its own right. Here, Noah is prophesying the line of Christ through Shem. Why is this important? Through God's covenant, God is continuing the line so we can see the Seed of the Woman promise fulfilled from Adam all the way to Christ (but without a human biological father.) Most importantly, He is making a road map for potential stewards, so they will have written historical verification of Christ's identity as God's own Son and the Savior of the world.

Milestone: Tower of Babel

Relevance: Culmination of Age of Human Government. Explanation of languages. End of the dispensation of Man (Gentiles). (Genesis 11:1)

1 Now the whole earth used
the same language and the
same words.

Noah's sons and daughters are repopulating the earth, and they are doing a good job of it. Logically, they all communicate in similar fashion, expressing themselves with similar tongue. But, not for long: (Genesis 11:4, 5-6, 7-9)

4 They said, "Come, let us build for
ourselves a city, and a tower whose
top will reach into heaven, and
let us make for ourselves a name,
otherwise we will be scattered
abroad over the face of the
whole earth."

Humans got together and start to decide things as a group. This is categorized as the age of human government. All the humans alive came together with one purpose, one intent, to rule themselves as one entity, building a tower all

the way to heaven. This is Man's plan and is in direct violation of God's own plan, in which He commanded Man to go forth and multiply and fill the earth. God's reaction?

- 5 The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.
- 6 The Lord said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them.

God doesn't like the idea of a globally unified human government. Neither should we. The potential for total power, total corruption, and total sin is too great. He takes action:

- 7 "Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech."
- 8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city.
- 9 Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

This is the condition of mankind before a very important part of history. It is the end of the dispensation of Man, where certain individuals like Noah and Shem might have some biblical knowledge and divine instruction, but are not "set apart" as a race of people saddled with the responsibility of being God's stewards on this earth. But that is about to change. The dispensation of Man is about to be **replaced**.

Milestone: The Abrahamic Covenant

Relevance: The delineation of the Jews as the stewards of God's Word. Continuation of the Seed of the Woman promise. Establishment of Abraham as father of the Jewish nation.

God is changing the responsibility of stewardship. There will be new stewards, an entire race of them, and their father will be Abraham. (Genesis 12:1-3)

- 1 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you;
- 2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing;
- 3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

God is making another covenant here, and one that will set up the framework for dispensations to come. Abram (soon to be Abraham) is told directly by God to leave his country. He is being set apart (made holy) by his obedience to God and his faith in the Seed of the Woman promise. God promises to make him a great nation, and to make his name great. He also promises to bless those who bless Abraham, and to curse those who curse him (important things to know if you are a gentile.) But the most amazing promise is the last one. Here is the continuation of the Seed of the Woman promise.

In Abraham, all the families of the earth will be blessed. How is this possible? Because Abraham is in the line of Christ, and one day, when Christ will be born, He will pay the price for sin through His blood on the cross, and will make possible through faith the redemption of the world. This is God's plan unfolding through the ages.

Take a close look here before moving on. What is God saying? Who is He saying it too? God is talking to Abraham, saying leave *your* country, *your* relatives, *your* father's house. He is talking to Abraham specifically and personally. He is making a covenant to the *individual* known as Abraham. This is a covenant, a promise written in the Word of God for all to see and for all to know.

God is putting His words in writing so they can be checked. If God is wrong, or is lying, or does not make good on His promise, we will know what kind of God He is. Further, this covenant ensures that these blessings will be for the person of Abraham and his familial offspring, the Jews. Taken literally, God is saying He will bless the Jews and those who treat them well, cursing those who treat them poorly. He is separating the Jews from other races, placing a boundary between the Jew and the non-Jew. This separation is direct and purposeful. God is setting apart His people, the new stewards on the earth, and He will perfectly fulfill all the promises He makes to them.

Why do we take the time to make this point? Because there is a dangerous trend in many Christian circles to disregard these covenants and promises. Minds that have not reconciled the entire Bible to itself have attacked the very concept of Israel, saying that the Church and Israel are the same. Replacement Theologians, Preterists, Amillennialists, and other groups pick and chose when to take the Bible literally, and when to take it *figuratively*. They contend that the Church is spiritual Israel, and that by changing the hearts and minds of non-believers into believers, that the current Church (spiritual Israel) will indeed bring about the second coming of Christ through **conversion**.

We contend that if the plain sense makes sense, don't look for any other sense. The Jews are separate, and are clearly set apart by God to be His chosen stewards during the Old Testament, and again in dispensations to come. To blur the lines between the Church and Israel denies these promises, and makes God into a liar who can renege on His stated promises. Simply put, if God made these promises to Abraham, doesn't He have to fulfill them? If He doesn't, then He likewise is under no obligation to fulfill the promises of salvation He makes to the Church. Is God off the hook? Can He make promises and then ignore them?

True to our own hermeneutic, if the Scripture were to then say "*Then Abraham, I will shift your family into a greater family, removing these boundaries, and waiting for every human on the earth to believe so I can send my Son back to earth to greet them.*" we would believe it. However, these sentiments are nowhere in Scripture. The lines of demarcation between Jews, Gentiles, and the Church are clearly defined as we move from dispensation to dispensation. Instead of blurring the boundaries between these groups, God explains in great detail what happens to each group as the plan unfolds.

Milestone: Isaac established as line of Christ.

Relevance: Further continuance of the Seed of the Woman promise. Passing on of covenant promises to Isaac. Further establishment of Israel. Fixes Isaac over Ishmael as the heir of Abraham. (Genesis 26: 1-5)

- 1 Now there was a famine in the land, besides the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. So Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines.
- 2 The Lord appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you.
- 3 "Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham.
- 4 "I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;
- 5 because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws."

God is setting up a pattern of discourse here, and setting up a definite line of blessing and promises. God is setting aside His people who will do His work, who will be the stewards of His Word on the earth. God is, very clearly, defining His relationship with the Jews. He is the God of Abraham. He is the God of Isaac. He is and will forever be known as The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and for good reason.

Please note:

It is at this milestone where the Bible and the Koran diverge. The Koran switches the story, saying that *Ishmael* is the blessed line, and that Isaac was the usurper. Thus the Koran openly defies the biblical teaching that God is the God

of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Thus, with God's declaration that He indeed is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we have logical evidence that the god of the Koran is not one and the same as the God of the Bible. This is not an esoteric difference. **God is not Allah**, by His own definition He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Milestone: Jacob established as line of Christ

Relevance: Establishment of the Jewish Nation. Continuance of the Seed of the Woman promise. Fixes Jacob over Esau as the Heir of Isaac. (Genesis 28:1-4)

- 1 So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan.
- 2 "Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.
- 3 "May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples.
- 4 "May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you, that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham."

A word about God's plan here. Remember, God's plan is unfolding. Not just in the *words* of the Scriptures as we have them, but in the *lives* of the people He is interacting with. God is telling a story, unveiling His work in the lives and experiences of His people. What's so important about defining who God is the God of? Why is it so important to trace the line of the coming "Seed of the Woman?"

The importance lies not just in the record of what happened, but in the reliable surety of the fact that it is all happening exactly *according to plan*. This is God's *eternal* Word, and His truth is from a divine perspective. God said He would send the Seed of the Woman. He said also He would glorify His Son, and that all things would be summed up in Him. This is what God was doing. God said exactly what He was going to do, and then executed His will exactly as He stated He would.

If we can acknowledge this pattern in the past, we can have an equal amount of confident surety in the events God says will happen in the future, after the current age and dispensation comes to an end.

Continuing with Jacob: Genesis 28:10-15

- 10 Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran.
- 11 He came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place.
- 12 He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.
- 13 And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants.
- 14 "Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.
- 15 "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

So many promises and God is liable for every single one. But make no mistake as to whom the promises are being made. God is defining Himself to the human race, and to His chosen people. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is the keeper of His people, the Jewish race, and those who oppose those people oppose God Himself. But conversely, God is also defining the race who will be given the stewardship of His Word.

Living in the Jewish age, but *not* a son of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Then you were not a Jew. You were a gentile. You could be saved, but you were in no means a *steward*. During that time, those were the rules.

The importance of these rules cannot be understated. God is setting apart a nation of people to be His people, a race *through which* we will then send His promised Son to redeem all peoples. His Son will come as a sacrifice, and will reconcile all nations, allowing anybody who wishes a renewed relationship with God. In so doing, every knee shall bow to Him, for He is worthy to receive the Glory coming to Him.

See? The plan is focused, constant, ongoing, unfolding. And right before our eyes.

Being God's people was truly a blessing, but it also came with an aspect of responsibility. During this dispensation, the Jewish nation was charged with being the keepers of God's Word. But what did that mean?

It meant that when it came time to send prophets, God sent *Jewish* prophets. He wrote *Hebrew* Scriptures. When it came time to reveal written Scriptures, they were *Jewish* writers. Nothing and nobody was left to chance. The Jews were given the Word, were given a lifestyle, and were given the law. These gifts defined them as God's chosen vehicles, used to deliver the communal riches of divine eternal truth to a world of finite human beings.

Milestone: Jacob Called Israel

Relevance: Seals Jacob and his descendants as Israel. (Genesis 32:28)

He said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed."

Plain and simple. Who was Israel? Jacob and his descendants. Who was the God of Israel? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So why is this definition important? Just imagine being alive during this time. You may have heard of the Savior, the Seed of the Woman, but who will He be? Where will He come from? When will He come? The answers would come in time, but they would all come from the same source: *Israel*.

Milestone: The Burning Bush

Relevance: Establishment of Moses as leader of the Jews. Coming of the Law. (Exodus 3:1-6)

1 Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law,

the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

2 The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed.

3 So Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up."

4 When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

5 Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

6 He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Does this mean only Jews could be saved? No. But they could only be saved by believing the promises handed down by Jewish writers, in Hebrew texts. And what promise was made for people to believe in? That the Seed of the Woman would come!

God establishes the Jews as His earthly nation with stewardship responsibilities from Abraham to the cross, roughly 2,000 BC to 33 AD. For us, this is a vital study in two ways. Of course it is important in understanding the Alpha to Omega plan of God, but it also informs us about what it means to be God's *stewards*. Consider the Jewish condition: Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God, and charged with fulfilling the Law of Moses. For the first time in history, a race of people served as God's representatives to the rest of the world. They were a physical representation of God's plan in motion.

What was it like to be a Jew during the Dispensation of Israel? According to the Bible, the Jewish race had every advantage and benefit in contrast with the

Gentiles. A prime advantage – the written Word of God. (Romans 3:1-2)

- 1 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?
- 2 Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.

Can we conceive this? No part of the Bible was written or available during the previous dispensation of Man where individuals like Job were directly addressed by the Almighty. During this age, the Jews were given the Word of God to follow, to hope for, to look forward to, to understand, to track the Seed of the Woman promise. When it came to finding the true divinely-inspired answer to “Why,” the Jews had not only the fast track, they had the only track.

Other prime advantages for Israel included their national adoption, national glory, eternal covenants, standards of perfection, temple holiness, prophetic hope, and patriarchal heritage. (Romans 9:4-5)

- 4 who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises,
- 5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

Of course, what’s the greatest advantage/blessing for Israel? The birth of the Christ. Through their race God brought forth the Savior of the entire universe. It is a blessing that will solidify the adopted holiness of their race for all eternity. Remember Genesis 12:3?

And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

Milestone: Introduction of the Mosaic Law to the Jews

Relevance: Demarcation of change of age of Promise to age of Law. Prophetic picture of Jesus on the cross. (Exodus 34:27-28)

- 27 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I

have made a covenant with you and with Israel.”

- 28 So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

For many people, the Mosaic Law is quite a stumbling block. For the most part, the entire Old Testament seems so antiquated, that it begs to be explained away as being *relative*. It is one of the most over-used arguments against the truthfulness of the Bible: (Leviticus 11:1-7)

- 1 The Lord spoke again to Moses and to Aaron, saying to them,
- 2 “Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘These are the creatures which you may eat from all the animals that are on the earth.
- 3 ‘Whatever divides a hoof, thus making split hoofs, and chews the cud, among the animals, that you may eat.
- 4 ‘Nevertheless, you are not to eat of these, among those which chew the cud, or among those which divide the hoof: the camel, for though it chews cud, it does not divide the hoof, it is unclean to you.
- 5 ‘Likewise, the shaphan, for though it chews cud, it does not divide the hoof, it is unclean to you;
- 6 the rabbit also, for though it chews cud, it does not divide the hoof, it is unclean to you;
- 7 and the pig, for though it divides the hoof, thus making a split hoof, it does not chew cud, it is unclean to you.

Are we supposed to uphold the Law? Is it wrong to eat ham? Is it forbidden to make a rabbit stew? Shouldn't we obey the Mosaic Law? It is God's direct instruction of righteousness, is it not?

These are all very good questions, and we should ask them. Fortunately, the answers are all available in the Word of God, if we take enough time to comprehend it.

The answers come to us through the understanding of God's plan, and His delineation of ages and dispensations. God gave the Law to Moses for a reason. He was setting the Jews apart as a special nation with special rules.

For those Jews at that time, **Yes**, it was against God's will to eat pigs and rabbits and shellfish. God was giving us a picture of His perfect righteousness, and was holding His people up to a standard they could not reach. The Law was a tool, a pointed stick, a school teacher used by God to show the Jews a picture of living perfection. There was no way the ordinary Jew could uphold every aspect of the Mosaic Law. Why not? Because, like us, they were all sinners. Every one of them was a sinner and every one of us is a sinner. God simply codified a law to teach us that fact, but He didn't stop there.

Included in the Law were not only the rules about what people could and could not do, but also what they were to do if they broke the law. God is a God of forgiveness, of loving kindness. The intent of the Law wasn't just to prove that people were bad, but to reveal God's plan of forgiveness and salvation. (Leviticus 1:1-5)

- 1 Then the Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying,
- 2 "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When any man of you brings an offering to the Lord, you shall bring your offering of animals from the herd or the flock.
- 3 'If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer it, a male without defect; he shall offer it at the doorway of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the Lord.
- 4 'He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that it may be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf.
- 5 'He shall slay the young bull before the Lord; and Aaron's sons the priests shall offer up the blood and

sprinkle the blood around on the altar that is at the doorway of the tent of meeting.

What is this all about? Some kind of Old Testament mumbo jumbo? Surely the sacrifice of live animals is barbaric. Not only is it outdated, it's a clear violation of animal rights!

Let's take a closer look at what God is doing here. First, we see that the bull or goat has to be *without defect*. It must be perfect. Second, they must put their hands on the head, that it may be accepted to make *atonement on his behalf*. Third they must sprinkle the blood on the altar, and in other passages, using hyssop branches they must sprinkle the blood on the entire crowd. What does all this add up to? Is it just some kind of sick, antiquated ritual of death? Or rather, is it the prophetic picture of what it takes to gain *eternal life*?

God's plan is progressive, and it is also illustrative. He is revealing what He will do before He does it. He is using teaching aids to get His point across. If we put all the pictures together, we see the future of what God has in store for the salvation of all believing mankind.

Our first "picture" of salvation came from Genesis. Remember Adam and Eve's clothing? After sinning for the very first time, they tried to cover their nakedness with leaves. But this wasn't good enough for God. God killed living animals and then gave the bloody skins to Adam and his wife *as a covering*.

Later, in our above passage from Leviticus, God continues to paint a picture of salvation using His chosen people, the Jews. God gave Moses the Law, which nobody but Christ would ever be able to fulfill. Then, He told the Jews that if they broke the Law, they had to make *atonement* for those infractions.

How was atonement reached? By finding a *replacement sacrifice*, a lamb or goat or bull *without defect*. After the sacrifice was found, you placed your hand on it to "transfer" your sins to it. Then, the Levitical priests killed the sacrifice by slitting its throat. They then sprinkled the blood on those believers who had, after being convicted in conscience, come to be atoned for.

Our picture is being painted over time! A picture of how sins are to be atoned for, according to the Word of God. Sins are atoned by:

- Finding a worthy sacrifice (lamb without spot)
- Transference of our sins to that sacrifice (through faith)
- Death of that sacrifice (paying the penalty for sin on our behalf.)

God is clearly painting a picture of the coming Christ! The Perfect Lamb, without sin, sacrificed on an altar, as a substitute for our sins! God is revealing the Gospel message through a shadow ritual that will one day come to fruition. Most importantly to our study:

God is giving relevant information to His chosen stewards, with rules and regulations specific to the times and circumstances in which they lived.

The Angels during their stewardship were living in specific conditions and had their own rules to follow. In the stewardship of Man, individuals were contacted by God personally, because that's how God saw fit to communicate. Different age, different set of rules. And so it continued into the dispensation of the Jews. God had specific instructions that clearly differed as the plan progressed. Thus, God changed His mode of operations. Is the Old Testament true? Of course. Are we to follow the Law? No. We are not spiritual Israel and we are not living in the age of Law. Thus, with an understanding of the Plan of God, we are able to put into *correct context* the commands and instructions revealed to the stewards of past dispensations.

How are we able to do this? The answer is at the very heart of our study. How do we know we aren't Israel? How can we be sure we aren't to obey every tenet of the Mosaic Law? How do we ascertain the differences between our stewardship and the stewardships of old?

We know because we have rightly divided the Word of Truth. We have used Scripture to define Scripture. We have made a logical, categorical, grammatical, historical, and dispensational study of the Word and have come to these conclusions. This process cannot be stressed enough. It is vital for us to understand: (2 Timothy 2:15)

We are to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

This is our charge. This is our function. This is our stewardship.

Now let's review.

Dispensational Checkpoint Overview:

In Eternity Past:

We saw the Eternal life conference. God the Father made the plan, God the Son and Holy Spirit agreed to submit and execute.

In the Dispensation of Alpha (creative ages, God the Son is steward):

We saw the "birth" of Jesus Christ's humanity in the hypostatic union (God/Man) plus the creation of the heavens, the angels and then the earth.

In the Dispensation of Angels (Angels are stewards):

We saw placement and service, Satan's fall, and the disastrous effect of sin on creation.

In the Dispensation of Man (Individual stewards):

We saw the restoration of the earth and creation of man. We also saw the age of innocence (Adam and Eve in the garden) the age of conscience (Adam and Eve's fall) and the age of Human Government (Tower of Babel.)

In the Dispensation of Israel (Israel as a nation of stewards):

We see the age of promise (Abraham to Moses) the age of Law (Moses to Christ.)

God's plan has progressed perfectly. He has created angels, man, and now a race of stewards called Israel. He has subsequently recorded proof that He will fulfill all of His promises. Ever wonder why God has all of those "boring begat" statements in the Bible? You know the ones we mean? The ones all the Hollywood writers pull out when they want to make fun of Christians? You know, when there's a church service and the preacher is droning on to a bored crowd trapped like rats in uncomfortable pews? Passages like this one in Genesis 10:24-27: (KJV)

- 24 Arphaxad begat Salah; and Salah begat Eber.
- 25 And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg; for in his days was the earth divided; and his brother's name was Joktan.
- 26 And Joktan begat Almodad, and Sheleph, and Hazarmaveth, and Jerah,
- 27 And Hadoram, and Uzal, and Diklah,

Well if you ever wondered why all of those were in the Bible, it should be becoming clear to you now. You see, God made a promise in Genesis. He promised the Seed of the Woman would come. We now know that the "seed" was Jesus Christ. How do we know? How do we know that Christ was born of Abraham, as promised to Abraham in the Abrahamic Covenant? How do we know that Christ was the son of Isaac, and Jacob? In the Davidic covenant, God continues His promise and states that Christ will be a son of David, and from the tribe of Judah. How do we know God is telling the truth?

God has provided it in written form. From Adam all the way to Christ, fulfilling the Seed of the Woman promise, as well as the covenants, God has traced the entire line of Christ.

From Adam to David:

Adam, Seth, Enosh, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah, Shem, Arphaxad, Cainan, Shelah, Heber, Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, Terah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Perez, Hezron, Ram, Admin, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David

Then at David, the record splits, tracking both Mary's and Joseph's line (even though Joseph wasn't the biological father, God still planned to have His line in the record. The line of Christ through Joseph was the legal line of descent and validated Jesus' claim to the throne of David. Both Mary and Joseph are descendants of David, and the text of scripture proves it.)

Here's David to Mary:

Nathan, Mattatha, Menna, Melea, Eliakim, Jonam, Joseph, Judah, Simeon, Levi, Matthat, Jorim, Eliezer, Joshua, Er, Elmadam, Cosam, Addi, Melchi, Neri, Shealtiel, Zerubbabel, Rhesa, Joanan, Joda, Josech, Semein, Mattathias, Maath, Naggai, Hesli, Nahum, Amos, Mattathias, Joseph, Jannai, Melchi, Levi, Matthat, Eli, (Mary).

Thus, with the advent of our newest age, the age of Christ's incarnation, we see the total fulfillment of the Seed of the Woman promise, and God has openly recorded the entire family line. He promised Abraham that He would make his name great, and that all the world would be blessed through him. God made good on His promise, and has given us the miraculous evidence.

Want to prove the Bible is a hoax, just a series of fables? Start with the genealogy of Jesus. If you can prove one name is incorrect, you can throw out the whole book.

People have been trying for 2,000 years.

Milestone: The Incarnation of Christ

Relevance: Continuation of Stewardship of Israel, as Christ is a Jew. Fulfillment of the Seed of woman promise. Beginning of the work of salvation.

Let's preface with the prophecy from Micah, written 700 BC, seven centuries before Christ's Birth: (Micah 5:2-5)

- 2 "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among

the clans of Judah, From you one will go forth for me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity."

- 3 Therefore He will give them up until the time When she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren will return to the sons of Israel.
- 4 And He will arise and shepherd His flock In the strength of the Lord, In the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. And they will remain, because at that time He will be great To the ends of the earth.
- 5 This One will be our peace.

Micah is a Jewish prophet, and he is prophesying about the geographical location of the coming Savior. Put this prophesy together with the genealogy of Jesus, and you have a perfect road map for finding, locating, and identifying the Son of God. He'll be in Bethlehem, in the line of Judah. And when should you look for Him? We have the precise date prophesied in Daniel 9:25:

"So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.

Seven weeks and sixty-two weeks may seem like a short time, but a thorough study of the Book of Daniel, together with correlations from the Book of Revelation, allows us to conclude each "week" is a period of seven 360-day years. We will provide additional detail in the *Milestone: The Church Age* section below, but for this moment observe the wisdom of the Magi. Their expectancy was right in line with the very generation that would see Daniel's sixty-ninth week fulfilled. And here's the fulfillment of the prophecy, coming from the Gospel of Matthew 2:1-6.

- 1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east

- arrived in Jerusalem, saying,
- 2 "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him."
- 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.
- 4 Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.
- 5 They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:
- 6 *'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, Are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; For out of you shall come forth a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.'* "

Notice the paragraph at the bottom? That's a direct quote from the Micah text. God is quoting Himself, giving evidence that He is true to His Word. He planned the coming of Christ from eternity past, and proceeds to bring about His "Seed of the Woman" promise in time, in the flesh, for all of humanity and angelic realm to behold. And since the Jews, the stewards of God's word have had these writings for thousands of years, we consequently have first-hand witnesses to the authenticity of the Bible as a whole.

And just how perfectly does God fulfill His promises? Just take a look at Isaiah 7:14.

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

700 years before Christ's Birth, it is revealed that the Christ will be born of a virgin. This is perhaps one of the greatest mysteries and one of the most highly contested events in all of Scripture. But if we have paid close attention, we cannot only identify the event as a milestone, but we can understand why the virgin birth is important in the plan of God! God promised the "Seed of the Woman," and He delivered. Christ was to be the Son of Man, and the Son of God. If He had been born with a biologically human father, He would have

inherited the effects of Adam's sin! He would have been born spiritually dead, like every other human being on the face of the planet. But with God the Father as the father, and Mary as the mother, the Seed of the Woman promise makes complete sense. Christ was perfect, was born without a sinful (Adamic) nature, and thus was born capable of becoming the perfect sacrifice on the cross.

God planned it in eternity past, revealed the plan in Genesis, and He executes His plan thousands of years later in Matthew. He knows the end from the beginning! What greater proof do we have that He is outside of time, completely in control of His plan, bringing about His purpose.

Milestone: Death and Resurrection of Christ

Relevance: Plan of Salvation accomplished. New details on the coming "mystery" age, the dispensation of the Church.

Previously, we showed how animal sacrifices were used to teach God's stewards during the Age of Law. These sacrifices were a picture of the coming Christ, and a teaching illustration of what Christ would accomplish on the cross. Now, are we supposed to be sacrificing sheep and goats to atone for our sins? No. How do we know? Because Scripture tells us. The author of Hebrews speaks on the very subject: (Hebrews 9:11-12, 13-14, 18-22)

- 11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation;
- 12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

Hebrews hits the nail on the head! The rituals of the Jewish texts were merely a foreshadowing of the reality that would one day take place in Heaven.

- 13 if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh,
- 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal

Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

According to God's eternal plan, Christ offered Himself up as a sacrifice. A perfect sacrifice that God the Father accepts for the atonement of all sin. The sacrifice is *real*, it is effective, just as it was *foreshadowed*, and sealed in *blood*:

- 18 Therefore even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood.
- 19 For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,
- 20 saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you."
- 21 And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood.
- 22 And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

From before the foundation of the World God planned to send His Son as a substitute, to pay the price for all sin, so that those who believed upon Him might be saved and have eternal life. God's picture of the suffering Christ is consistent, from the Old Testament rituals to the cross on Calvary. Every step is in perfect accordance with His purpose, the glorification of His Son, of whom He is well pleased.

Milestone: Day of Pentecost - Matthew. 16:18

Relevance: Beginning point of the Church age.

Here we are, at a point 2000+ years after this milestone. After this milestone, every other event will be a prophetic one, but we can have just as much confidence that the Bible accurately describes what will happen in the future as in the past. This milestone is a very important one, as it begins the Church age, and brings with it new revelation about the change in stewardship. Let's start a little before the actual day of Pentecost, when Christ has not yet suffered on the cross. (Matthew 16:15)

- 15 He (Jesus) said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"
- 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
- 17 And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

So Peter has just professed his personal faith that Christ is the Savior, the fulfillment of the Seed of the Woman promise. This is setting up a key milestone here, for before salvation had always been faith in a *coming Messiah*. During the entire Old Testament, the Jews were always looking forward to His arrival. Now that He has come, all faith in Christ will be an acceptance that He was born of the woman, Son of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Son of Man, Son of God, and Son of David. Jesus acknowledges Peter's confession and makes it the rock upon which the Church will be built. (Matthew 16:18-19)

- 18 "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.
- 19 "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

Now does this mean Peter was the first Pope and that the appropriate thing to do is take his physical body and use it as a cornerstone upon which built a lavish billion-dollar church/bank/museum?

No. It's clear that Jesus is talking about Peter's faith and not about his physical body. Faith in the Christ who came to earth as the God/Man is the basis of salvation in the Church age. Faith that Christ was who He said He was, and was the fulfillment of the Seed of the Woman promise. That's the realization that Peter came to, and it is that very claim that was rejected by the majority of Jews at the time.

See the transition here? From this milestone on, it is not a faith in a coming Messiah. It is faith in Jesus Christ Himself that is the basis for salvation, for the building of Christ's Church on the earth, His eternal bride, the royal family of God. This is different from the Jews, who were primarily focusing on racial lines, and the lineage of their forefathers. This is not to be considered a bad thing, as it was God Himself who set up the lines of lineage as guidelines for the Jews to follow, tracing the line to Christ Himself.

Racial lineage was extremely important to the Jews, and for good reason. The Jewish family line dictates their inheritance, their geographical location, even their job and spiritual function. Genealogy was a way to set apart and define the spiritual lives of the Jews. But moving forward through time, God changes His mode of operation. Where before He was utilizing the Jews as His primary stewards, things are about to change after the resurrection of Christ. Paul breaks the news to the people in Galatians: (Galatians 3:23-25, 26-27, 28-29)

- 23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.
- 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.
- 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Important shift here. Before faith, there was the Law because Christ had not yet been revealed. The Law led people to look for and identify the Christ, as He was the fulfillment of the Law. But now that Christ has come, there are changes in the works:

- 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
- 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Now, it is no longer a faith that looks forward. There's no more sacrificing bulls and goats as pictures of the prophetic future. Christ has come and it is the faith in Him that baptizes us. Thus, God is setting up a new path to stewardship, and He is enlisting a wider audience. An audience based solely on faith, open to any and all who will believe, and not linked by physical lineage. It's quite a bomb, but Paul drops it without hesitation:

- 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
- 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

Boom. There it is in black and white. Surely it was hard for the Jews to believe at the time. They were a people separated, set apart, and they had specific promises issued to them. Were all these promises now suddenly defunct? Was God a liar? Was the Church now Israel?

Absolutely not. Israel was Israel, the *believing descendants* of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Those promises were made and must be kept by God. So what is happening here? Let's look at our official milestone, the actual day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:1-4):

- 1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.
- 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.
- 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.
- 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

Jesus has already died, risen, and ascended to heaven. But He had promised something. He had promised to send a *helper*. That helper was the Holy Spirit Himself. (John 14:16-17)

- 16 "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;
 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

Whereas in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit would indwell individuals to suit God's purpose, there is something completely different going on here. The Holy Spirit is now baptizing all members of this stewardship, dwelling within them, having fellowship with them. With us! Where we were once dead in Adam, we are now alive in Christ. A change has taken place, a phenomenal shift in the way God will be dealing with us, communicating with us, and helping us. Paul explains more to the Ephesians: (Ephesians 2:1-3, 4-7, 8-10)

- 1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,
 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.
 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

We were all dead in Adam. Our human spirits died, separating us from God because of sin. The coming Christ was a picture of that sacrifice. The faith was that someday, a Lamb without spot would come and would bleed, and that the sins we committed would be put on Him and not us. Now that that has actually happened, God calls on all nations, all peoples, all genders. He is inviting all who will believe to become sons of God, saved through the fantastic achievement of Jesus Christ. To any who believe, He offers salvation, an *identification* with Christ in similar fashion as we were previously identified with Adam. Adam died (spiritually) when he sinned (dying thou shalt die). Now, God is following suit with Christ as our Second Adam. He is identifying us with Christ, and imputing Christ's righteousness onto us.

- 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),
 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,
 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Slowly read that passage again. Only after Jesus had ascended could any of this take place. Now that He has, God raises us up with Christ, rejuvenates our human spirits, and allows us to function both here *and in heaven*. We are now a heavenly people, a new spiritual race of stewards. We have our own identity, and our own destiny.

- 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;
 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.
 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

We are a separate people, a separate stewardship. God is not done with the Jews as a stewardship, or as a people, but during this strange, mysterious age things are different than in previous dispensations. See how important it is to understand the significance of stewardships? It helps us to understand the progression from one dispensation to another, and helps us to rightly divide the word of truth.

For example, one might ask the question "Does God speak to us today?" Or you might encounter a person of faith who swears that they are "filled with the spirit" so they jump up and down and whoop and holler speaking gibberish.

What do we say? Is it still possible? Should we be speaking in tongues and

working ourselves up into a frenzy? Is that what it means to be *spiritual*?

By studying the Word of God we can have solid, reasonable answers for these questions. By knowing the differences in ages and dispensations we can give good answers. Does God speak to us today? Yes! Through His Word! Does He come to us in dreams and visions and talk directly to us as He did with Abraham? No. Since we have the completed canon of Scripture, we have a real picture of who we are and how we are supposed to operate. Tongues was a spiritual gift, but was for a particular purpose at a particular time. They were enlisted by the Holy Spirit so that the Jews could hear the Gospel in their own vernacular. That gift is over, done with, gone. Doing it now is tomfoolery.

Likewise, Paul was given the gift of healing, even resuscitation. Are we apostles? Can we lay on hands and cure people instantly? God, of course, is sovereign, and can heal who He wishes, but that functioning *spiritual gift* is no longer operational. It came to a screeching halt after 96 AD. Our spiritual function is not to go around hitting people on the head and declaring "You are cured!" As stewards in this dispensation, we are told explicitly to confess our sins, learn the Word, stay in fellowship, and pray incessantly. If there is any healing to be done, God takes care of it from there.

Are these changes mysterious? Of course they are. We may not completely understand them, but that is what has been revealed to us. Remember, the Plan of God is progressive, and we are given just the information we need to function in our time. Anything more would be beyond our comprehension.

Milestone: The Church Age

Relevance: Building of the Bride of Christ. Mystery intercalation. Stewardship of the Jews put "on hold."

The Age of the Church is a mystery. If we look at the time we live in with Jewish eyes, the whole of our existence is not completely detailed until the New Testament. To further the *mysterion*, almost no prophetic milestones are given to us to determine the duration of our age. We know only that the Rapture will take place, and that at that time, the stewardship of Israel will return for the period of seven years, the time of Jacob's trouble. That is not to say we don't expect the Rapture very soon. Scripture commands us to expect the return of Jesus Christ at any moment, but it does not provide prophetic details as to when it will happen. Mysteriously, we can differentiate the conditions of our age by looking at prophetic revelation of what will happen after it's conclusion. Jesus clues us in. (Matthew 24:3-14)

3 As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him

privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

- 4 And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you.
- 5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.
- 6 "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end.
- 7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.
- 8 "But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.
- 9 "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.
- 10 "At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another.
- 11 "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many.
- 12 "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.
- 13 "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.
- 14 "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Now, do we take this as prophecy of our age? We do have wars and rumors of wars. We have earthquakes, Christian persecution, surely an increase in lawlessness. Is Jesus showing us that we are in the end times? No. Christ speaks of a coming time where all these judgments will come upon the earth, but all of these prophetic events happen after the Rapture. How

do we know this? Because we have no Scripture that prophesizes any events between the coming of the Holy Spirit and the Rapture. When Christ speaks of these events, they are during a time known as the Tribulation. The Tribulation is a future time that will commence soon after the Rapture. How do we know the differences between our age and the age of Israel? The truth is we have to put a lot of pieces together from the Old and New Testament.

As we have already seen, the Church age is delineated by the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell each believer. This is not a regular occurrence, and is special to our age. Jesus tells us more while detailing His departure: (John 16:7-11, 12, 13-14)

- 7 "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.
- 8 "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;
- 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me;
- 10 and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me;
- 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

So Christ is going away to His Father, and will therefore send the Holy Spirit. Christ died, ascended to heaven, and we saw the beginning of the Church age. So we know we are now in the age where the Holy Spirit is here on the earth and Christ is away. What else do we know?

- 12 "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

Again, we have to remember that God's plan is being progressively revealed. He only tells us what we can bear and understand, but there is more:

- 13 "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on

His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

- 14 "He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.
- 15 "All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.

This is a very special, intimate, and still mysterious promise. During this age, the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth. He will not speak of His own initiative, but will teach to us what He hears. A further more detailed study of how Doctrine is actually learned could follow, but suffice it to say the Holy Spirit is within us, teaching us God's truth.

Now, we know where we are and where the Holy Spirit is. How can we know what will happen next if we have no prophetic Scripture?

The answer is *prophetic Scripture*. We may not have any prophetic Scripture about this age, but we have incredible amounts about all the other ages. This is a special time, our stewardship. We have the completed Scripture, and the Holy Spirit, but God tells us little more about what is going to happen before the Rapture. This is an excellent time to remind ourselves that the Plan of God is not about us! It is about Christ. More importantly, the majority of Scripture isn't about us either. It's mostly about the Jews.

When it comes to understanding our age, we can find our best indications on its boundaries by looking at the prophetic Scripture we have about Jewish ages. Let's go back to Daniel 9:24, 25, 26, 27:

- 24 Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.

To make a long story short, Daniel prophesizes that a decree will be issued to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. From the time of that decree until Messiah the Prince arrives will be sixty nine "weeks." That decree took place just as Daniel prophesied. It was the (second) decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus in Nehemiah 2 and it was delivered on March 5, 444 BC.

The sixty nine “sevens” Daniel defines are 360–day years. Consequently, each “seven” is 2520 days. If each shabuwa` is 2520 days, then 69 of these shabu`iyim equals 173,880 days.

Thus if we use the Jewish calendar, and this prophesy, we see one of the greatest proofs that the Bible is in fact the inerrant and inspired word of God. What happened 173,880 days after March 5, 444 BC? That date ends up on March 30, 33 AD. Palm “Monday” the triumphal entry into Jerusalem four days before Good Friday crucifixion on April 3, 33 AD.

- 25 “So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.

Christ did come at this time. The decree was issued by Artaxerxes after Jerusalem was destroyed to rebuild the city. Christ’s arrival on the back of a donkey happened exactly as planned. His arrival was accurate to the day, though prophesied hundreds of years before his birth. Now Daniel continues to tell the story of the Jews:

- 26 “Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.

Daniel prophesies the death of Christ, and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. But that’s not all:

- 27 “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is

decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

The prince who is to come is in view here, the Antichrist wholly empowered by Satan. One week of years is described here. A seven year period, commencing after the prince, will make a covenant with the many.

An exhaustive study of Daniel and revelation could follow, detailing all the prophetic events that are scheduled for the Tribulation, but in pertinence to our study, we can look at a concept here that is very important. God has given the Jews 70 weeks of years:

1. to finish the transgression,
2. to make an end of sin,
3. to make atonement for iniquity,
4. to bring in everlasting righteousness,
5. to seal up vision and prophecy and
6. to anoint the most holy place.

In other words, He has given a set amount of time to fulfill all these things. Daniel tells us when the Christ is coming, and when He is taken away. He gives us no indication of how long Christ is gone. However, he talks specifically about *one last week*.

If we look at all the things that have transpired in relation to the Jews from the beginning of time until now, we can begin to see the entirety of God’s plan in action. God has planned seventy weeks of years (70 X 7,490 years) to complete these actions. But these actions have not yet taken place! We still have transgression; there is no end of sin, no everlasting righteousness.

The truth of the revelation is this: **God is not done with the Jews.** Their prescribed time is not yet over. Daniel said there were seven and sixty–two weeks past, which comes to 69 weeks. There’s still one week of years left!

We have not taken the Jew’s place, they have simply been put on hold for awhile. Many theologians use the word “intercalation” to describe the Church age, and the insertion of our stewardship during this time. Others say that spiritual Israel is in a type of “suspended animation.” Again, it’s a mystery, but not one we should try to explain away. It is one we should simply accept as revealed. It’s our turn to be stewards, but the stewardship of Israel will return upon our departure.

We know that during this mysterious age, we are God’s stewards, the Church, the Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, the Royal Family of God. We know

that right now, there is no (spiritual) Jew or Gentile, no slave or free. But we also know that God has a lot to accomplish, and has set apart one more week (7 more years) to make it all happen. Thus, when we read Revelation, we are able to compare Scripture to Scripture and conclude that indeed, the tribulation will be a terrible time, commencing *after* the Rapture, and of a fixed duration of seven years.

So while we don't know how long our dispensation, our stewardship will last, we know who we are (the Church) and how we are to operate (under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.) And when our stewardship does come to a close, we will know it without question. We have been told exactly what will happen next.

Milestone: The Rapture

Relevance: Prophetic End of the Church Age. Return to the stewardship of Israel. The beginning of the Great Tribulation. The great winepress, and precursor to the 2nd advent of Christ.

Few milestones in the history of Scripture are more hotly debated. Since the Rapture is the next prophetic event recorded in the Scripture, it is no doubt the single most anticipated event of our time. Some say it is not clearly revealed in Scripture, and even that the great tribulation was actually fulfilled in the sacking of Jerusalem by Rome in 70 AD. But since we now know for sure that John wrote Revelation after 70 AD, that entire issue is moot and we won't waste our time on it. We will, however, set the scene for the removal of Church age believers by the Lord Jesus Christ as described by Paul to the Thessalonians. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

- 13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.
- 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

Paul is pretty clear here. He expresses faith in Christ's real, physical resurrection. But he doesn't stop there:

- 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the

Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

We (us, those in the Church age who are alive upon the event of the coming of the Lord to retrieve us) shall not be raised before those who have already died in Christ. Why?

- 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.
- 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.
- 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Pretty clear description, and little left to the imagination in terms of sequence. Why are we not brought up to face Jesus first? Because God will raise the dead first and we will meet them together in the air. Any questions?

Here's one! Why? Why will we be raised? For what purpose? Paul answers that question in his address to the Corinthians. (1 Corinthians 15:50-51, 52-53)

- 50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.
- 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,

God has a purpose behind every event. In terms of the Rapture, not only are we removed so that Daniel's 70th week can commence, the time of Jacob's trouble, but it also serves another purpose. In our present state, we have fallen bodies. Our flesh and blood cannot stand to be in the presence of a glorified Jesus Christ. We are perishable, thus we must undergo a *transformation*.

- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead

will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

Thus we have an answer not only to what the Rapture is, but why it is necessary. It is necessary to prepare us to face Christ, and it is necessary to remove us so that Satan can have free reign over the earth during the tribulation.

The Rapture, from a dispensational standpoint, must precede the Great Tribulation. As we have covered, this tribulation is prophesied to last 7 years not only in Revelation, but also in Daniel. This seven year span will entail terrible events never before seen and that will never be seen again. Within that span, there are hundreds of milestones that are important to be understood. A proper study with corroborating Scripture would take ages, so we will condense in form of summary:

Once Antichrist makes a deal for peace with Israel, the seven years commence. There are three and a half years of peace and tranquil “harmony” on the earth, but half-way through the tribulation (3.5 years to be exact) the antichrist reveals his true nature. He enters the revived Jewish temple and demands that he be worshipped as God. At this point, all hell breaks loose, God sets off the trumpets, the bowls, and the “woe” judgments, basically plaguing, killing, and destroying the earth. During this “great winepress,” people will wish for death, but will not find it. The gates of hell themselves are opened and tenacious demons are allowed to sting unbelievers to their heart’s content. Concurrently, the stewardship of Israel is reinstated and 144,000 Jews take to the streets issuing the Gospel. Countless people are saved during this time, and are killed for doing so.

Near the end of the tribulation, things look their worst for the Jews. All the armies of the earth have driven their arms to the field of Megiddo where the final battle of Armageddon will take place. They have come to destroy Jerusalem, and will have a final terrible standoff with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Which brings us to our next milestone.

Milestone: The 2nd Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Relevance: End of the great tribulation. Beginning of Millennium (1,000 year reign of Christ on the throne of Israel).

The promise of the 2nd advent of Christ is foretold in numerous Scriptures, from both the Old and New Testaments. Jesus ascends to heaven right before the day of Pentecost. His return is immediately announced: (Acts 1:9-11)

- 9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.
- 10 And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.
- 11 They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

Jesus describes it Himself. (Luke 17:22-27)

- 22 And He said to the disciples, “The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it.
- 23 “They will say to you, ‘Look there! Look here!’ Do not go away, and do not run after them.
- 24 “For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day.
- 25 “But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.
- 26 “And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:
- 27 they were eating, they were

drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

John sees the entire event first hand: (Revelation 19:11-21)

- 11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.
- 12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself.
- 13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.
- 14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.
- 15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.
- 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."
- 17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God,
- 18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves,

and small and great."

- 19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.
- 20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.
- 21 And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

So, in a nutshell, the armies of the earth are gathered for the great battle of Armageddon and the Lord Jesus Christ appears and slays all of them with the word of His mouth. Their bodies are stacked up and the blood is as deep as a horse's bridle, and all the birds show up for a great feast. It is the end of the tribulation, and the end of Satan's rule on the earth, at least temporarily.

The second coming of Christ ushers in a Kingdom age where He himself will sit as King of the Jews, receiving tribute from the entire world. In the beginning, all unbelievers are slain and are taken away pending a later judgment. You would think it would be a utopian society, given there will be a perfect King with perfect knowledge, no more war or anything like that. But one aspect of human reality remains, even during the 1,000 year reign of Christ. That reality? While all unbelievers are removed and only believers exist at the start, the old sin nature is not removed in the standard human population. Biology continues, and the Law is sealed only in the hearts of the Jews, but not in the rest of mankind. In the entirety of the 1,000 years, men will be born who refuse to believe that Christ is a righteous king. The events are not completely explained, but nations will rise up and demand that Satan be released. The ensuing rebellion against Christ takes place, but is immediately dealt with by the God the Father. (Rev. 20:7-10)

- 7 When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison,

- 8 and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.
- 9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them.
- 10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Thus endeth the Millennium.

Milestone: Great White Throne Judgment

Relevance: Final Judgment of all unbelievers. Final Judgment of all rebellion. All necessary in preparation of the new heavens and new earth. (Revelation 20:11-15)

- 11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.
- 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.
- 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.

- 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.
- 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Now if this were the **ONLY** Scripture reference of this judgment, you might begin to think that we are all judged by our deeds -- good deeds get you into heaven and bad deeds keep you out. However, that is a blind interpretation in view of the Doctrine of the Great White Throne Judgment and the alternative Judgment Seat of Christ. It is the alternative because you can be at either one or at the other, but not both. Faith in Jesus Christ is a precondition of which judgment you will attend. Those who believe in Christ and put their faith in Him are saved and are judged by fire at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Failure to believe in Christ remands you to the other docket, the Great White Throne Judgment seen here (*For more teaching on the Judgment Seat of Christ, see ABC Reader #2*).

Our evidence is here in John 3:16-19:

- 16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.
- 17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.
- 18 "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.
- 19 "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

He who believes is saved. He who *does not believe* is unsaved, and will therefore be judged according to his deeds. (But because we also know that Jesus paid the price for ALL sin once and for all, these unbelievers are not judged by their evil deeds, but for the deeds they committed thinking they could earn their place in heaven.) Nevertheless, unbelievers are thrown into the lake of fire and are removed from God's presence forever.

Milestone: Creation of New Heavens & New Earth

Relevance: Creation of a place for the Fullness of Times. Removal of all sin and rebellion. Fulfillment of covenantal promises. Restoration to a non-cursed creation. And ultimately: Glorification of Christ. (Rev. 21:1-4, 5-8, 9-27)

- 1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.
- 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.
- 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,
- 4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

Note here that this event doesn't happen until the creation of the new heavens and new earth. It does not happen in the millennium, as many believe.

- 5 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."
- 6 Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.
- 7 "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.
- 8 "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons

and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Who is he that will overcome? *He who believes in Christ.* Remember we were all once dead in Adam. We were all once abominable, unbelieving murderers and immoral persons. It is only because of Christ's righteousness ascribed to us through the **PLAN OF GOD** that we are able to stand in the presence of Him where righteousness dwells.

- 9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."
- 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,
- 11 having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.
- 12 It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel.
- 13 There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west.
- 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.
- 15 The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall.
- 16 The city is laid out as a square, and

its length is as great as the width;
 and he measured the city with the
 rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length
 and width and height are equal.

17 And he measured its wall, seventy-
 two yards, according to human
 measurements, which are also
 angelic measurements.

18 The material of the wall was
 jasper; and the city was pure gold,
 like clear glass.

19 The foundation stones of the city
 wall were adorned with every
 kind of precious stone. The first
 foundation stone was jasper;
 the second, sapphire; the third,
 chalcedony; the fourth, emerald;

20 the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth,
 sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the
 eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the
 tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh,
 jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.

21 And the twelve gates were twelve
 pearls; each one of the gates was
 a single pearl. And the street of
 the city was pure gold, like
 transparent glass.

22 I saw no temple in it, for the Lord
 God the Almighty and the Lamb
 are its temple.

23 And the city has no need of the
 sun or of the moon to shine on it,
 for the glory of God has illumined
 it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

24 The nations will walk by its light,
 and the kings of the earth will bring
 their glory into it.

25 In the daytime (for there will be no
 night there) its gates will never be
 closed;

26 and they will bring the glory and
 the honor of the nations into it;

27 and nothing unclean, and no
 one who practices abomination

and lying, shall ever come into it,
 but only those whose names are
 written in the Lamb's book of life.

Again, God has a purpose for everything. It is all a part of His plan. He has created angelic and human beings, let them rebel until they were blue in the face, and prepared a bride for His Son. He has rid the universe of all sin and evil, created a new eternal heavens and earth, and for what purpose? *The Fullness of Times*.

Milestone: Thousand Generations

Relevance: The Fullness of Times. Summing up of all things in Christ. Ultimate fulfillment of all promises made to Israel and every other being created throughout time. It is the ultimate glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ,.

The duration and nature of this dispensation of perfect happiness is given in several places in Scripture:

Deuteronomy 7:9

9 "Know therefore that the Lord
 your God, He is God, the faithful
 God, who keeps His covenant
 and His lovingkindness to a
 thousandth generation with those
 who love Him and keep His
 commandments;

1 Chronicles 16:14-16

14 He is the Lord our God;
 His judgments are in all the earth.
 15 Remember His covenant forever,
 The word which He commanded to
 a thousand generations,
 16 The covenant which He made with
 Abraham, and His oath to Isaac.

Psalm 105:8-11

8 He has remembered His
 covenant forever, the word
 which He commanded to a
 thousand generations,

- 9 The covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac.
- 10 Then He confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant,
- 11 Saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion of your inheritance,"

This dispensation will last a thousand generations, and will be the fulfillment of all promises in Christ. It is a time we can only dream of, and can only gently understand, but it will be a glorious time, the end game of all of God's planning.

It is a special time, a time we are to prepare for and look forward to:
(2 Peter 3:13-15)

- 13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.
- 14 Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,
- 15 and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,

It will be a time of a new heavens and a new earth. It will be a time of righteousness ushered in by a God of Righteousness. It will be better than any time in all of history. It will be the pinnacle of God's great achievement, and we will get to share in its joyous unveiling.

So then what? Everything is summed up in Christ; He is truly glorified, according to the purpose and plan of God the Father. What could possibly happen next?

Milestone: Great Abdication

Relevance: Returning Son will put all His attained glory in subjugation back to the Father. The end of time and return to Eternity. (1 Corinthians 15:22-28)

- 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.
- 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,
- 24 then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.
- 25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.
- 26 The last enemy that will be abolished is death.
- 27 For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him.
- 28 When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

Read this passage very carefully.

This is the simplest summation of the purpose and plan of God we have. Glorification of Christ? Yes, that is God's plan. But what we see here is the culmination of something even greater than that: a re-gathering of all of God's creations and the subjugation of those creations from the Son back to the Father. God the Father glorifies Christ, and then Christ glorifies God the Father. It is a presentation of perfect glory created and executed by a perfect plan, with the result that God is returning all to a state of eternity. A return to a state where God is *all in all*.

The perfect, divine, circular nature of God's plan is now revealed in its entirety. From Alpha to Omega, from the beginning to the end, we have seen a well planned, perfectly executed plan. Moreover, we have seen the reasons for that plan, with the end game being more than just the glorification of Christ, but

the glorification of Christ and subsequent re-glorification of God the Father, whose love for the Son is *reciprocated*. Yes, God planned every detail of existence to glorify His Son, but that is not the end of the story. The story began in love, the love the Father had in eternity past for His Son. Then, after the maximum glorification of His Son, the Son then returns that love and glorification to the Father as an answer to that love, with the results being a return to the glory of eternity. Our evidence of this intent comes not only from our above passage, but from the words of Christ's own prayers to His Father. (John 17:1-4)

- 1 Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You,
- 2 even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.
- 3 "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.
- 4 "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.

Christ knew God's plan, and He freely reveals it to us all.

- The Father sent Him to be glorified, yet the Son is intent on glorifying the Father.
- The Father granted Christ all authority, so He could grant eternal life.
- The purpose of eternal life? That we might know the one true God, and His Son Jesus Christ.

Jesus accomplished the work of salvation, glorifying the Father and His plan. Then He asks very simply for the whole plan to come together. (John 17:5)

"Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

The Father loved His Son, and the Son loved His Father. A perfect love found in a perfect God, revealed in a perfect plan, with this goal in mind: *To return to the glory which They have always enjoyed.*

But things are different after the abdication! Christ returns to the Father in order to return to the glory the Trinity shared in eternity past, but after the Alpha and Omega, Christ takes us with Him! We share in God's Glory! (John 17:22)

- 22 "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

Here Christ re-asserts the identification which takes place at spiritual baptism (faith in Christ.) Christ is in us, and the Father is in *Him*, therefore fellowship is established between God the Father and us. To what end? Jesus voices His desire:

"Father, I desire 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.

Christ prays that we might be with Him, so we can witness not only the achieved glory Christ earned on the cross, but the pure eternal love that God the Father had for His Son, before the foundation of the world.

Milestone: Eternity Future

Relevance: The eternal state of God and all redeemed creation, total immersion in the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with special focus on the love between the Father and the Son.

What can be said about this future? How do we grasp it? How do we graph it? It is a future reality we can only imagine, based on the plan and promises of God. We will have eternal life basking in the glow of God's eternal glory and the very special love that God the Father has for His Son.

We will live there, in that cradle of perfect joy, for all of eternity. We will be finite creatures with an infinite future, because of the work of Jesus Christ. We will live as God lives. We will love as God loves. The Father in the Son, The Son in us, the Father in us:

Through Christ, redeemed humanity will be one with God.

Thus endeth God the Father's dispensational grace eternal plan of the ages for the maximum glorification of Jesus Christ.

You got all that?

Dispensational Summation:

If we step back and take a more general look at the concept of dispensational thinking, we see the changing of stewardship over time. The identification of the stewards involved, their roles and modes of operation help us to understand the differences between times and peoples from a divine viewpoint.

If we, as we have done, plot out the major events as revealed in Scripture, we build a timeline of events. But more than that, we begin to see larger models, larger progressions based not on time, but on relevance to both physical and spiritual, even heavenly realms of existence.

As we have covered, here are a list of ages and dispensations:

Eternity Past	<i>(Before time, God in eternity.)</i>
Eternal Life Fellowship	<i>(Father loves the Son)</i>
Eternal Life Conference	<i>(Father plans, Son and Holy Spirit agree)</i>
Divine Decrees	<i>(Plan is decreed)</i>
Dispensation of Alpha (creative ages)	<i>(Beginning of time, Birth of humanity of Christ)</i>
Creation of Heavens	<i>(Heavens created)</i>
Creation of Heavenly Host	<i>(Heavens populated)</i>
Creation of Earth	<i>(Earth Created)</i>
Dispensation of Angels	<i>(Angels as stewards)</i>
Placement and Service	<i>(State of "innocent" Angelic stewardship)</i>
Rebellion and Warfare	<i>(Fall of Satan)</i>
Judgment/ Destruction of Earth	<i>(Effect of sin on creation)</i>
Dispensation of Man	<i>(Man as stewards)</i>
Restoration of Earth/ Creation of Man	<i>(Man and Woman created)</i>
Age of Innocence	<i>(State of "innocent" human stewardship)</i>
Age of Conscience	<i>(Fall of Man, *seed of woman promise*)</i>
Age of Human Government	<i>(Fall of Babel, man scattered)</i>

Dispensation of Israel	<i>(Jews as Stewards)</i>
Age of Promise	<i>(Promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob)</i>
Age of Law	<i>(Mosaic Law- Picture of Christ)</i>
Age of Incarnation	<i>(Life of Christ as God-Man)</i>
Intercalation	<i>(Suspension of dispensation of Israel)</i>
Dispensation of Church	<i>(Believers as stewards)</i>
Age of Apostles	<i>(Early gifts, establishment of Church)</i>
*Age of Local Church	<i>(Building Body/Bride of Christ)</i>
Age of Tribulation	<i>(Conclusion of Dispensation of Israel)</i>
Age of Kingdom	<i>(Millennium, Jews and Christ as stewards)</i>
Dispensation of the Fullness of the Times	(1000 Generations, Christ glorified)
Great Abdication	<i>(Offering back to Father, God is all in all)</i>

Now just dispensations:

Dispensation of Alpha (creative ages)	<i>(No Stewards)</i>
Dispensation of Angels	<i>(Angelic Stewards)</i>
Dispensation of Man	<i>(Human Stewards)</i>
Dispensation of Israel	<i>(Jewish Stewards)</i>
Dispensation of Church	<i>(Church-age Stewards)</i>
Tribulation-Dispensation of Israel	<i>(Return to Jewish Stewardship)</i>
Dispensation of the Fullness of the Times	<i>(All of creation as Stewards)</i>

See the progression of creation? See the progression of Stewardship? See the progressive nature of God's plan?

**Innocence – Conscience – Government – Law – Grace
Angels – Man – Israel – Church – Christ – All in All**

Summary points: The Plan of God

- God loved His Son and wanted to glorify Him.
- He made a plan, executed by the Son.
- God the Son became the God-Man.
- Angels were created, fell
- Man was created, fell, given Seed of Woman promise
- Jews were called out
- Jews given Law and sacrifice as picture of Christ to come
- Christ virgin-born in Bethlehem as Jesus (Savior)
- Christ lived perfect life as prophesied, the Lamb without spot
- Christ is killed on the Cross
- Christ becomes perfect sacrifice, defeats Sin on the Cross
- Christ dies, was buried, rose from the dead, and ascended to the Father
- Church (believers) called out, given Christ's righteousness
- Church taken away (Rapture)
- Great winepress, end of Jewish discipline
- 2nd Advent of Christ, death of all unbelievers (temporarily)
- 1,000 year reign of Christ
- Final rebellion (Gog and Magog)
- Satan and the fallen angels cast into lake of fire
- Rebellion conquered, earth and heavens destroyed
- Great White Throne Judgment, end of all rebellion
- Re-creation of new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells
- 1000 generations of glorification of Christ, fullness of times
- Great abdication: Son returns to Father in subjection.
- Omega (The Age of Ages.) Return to a state of eternity. God is all in all.

Summary and Admonition.

Why?

It's the greatest question in all the universe, and we have the greatest answer.

Because God loves His Son, and has created all of heaven, earth, and hell to glorify Him.

As part of the plan, God the Son became Human, suffered the penalty for sins of all created, finite creatures, then offered redemption to all who were willing to agree that Christ is Lord. To Him, every knee shall bow, and all glory and honor will be His, even as He returns all glory to the Father, whom He has loved from eternity past.

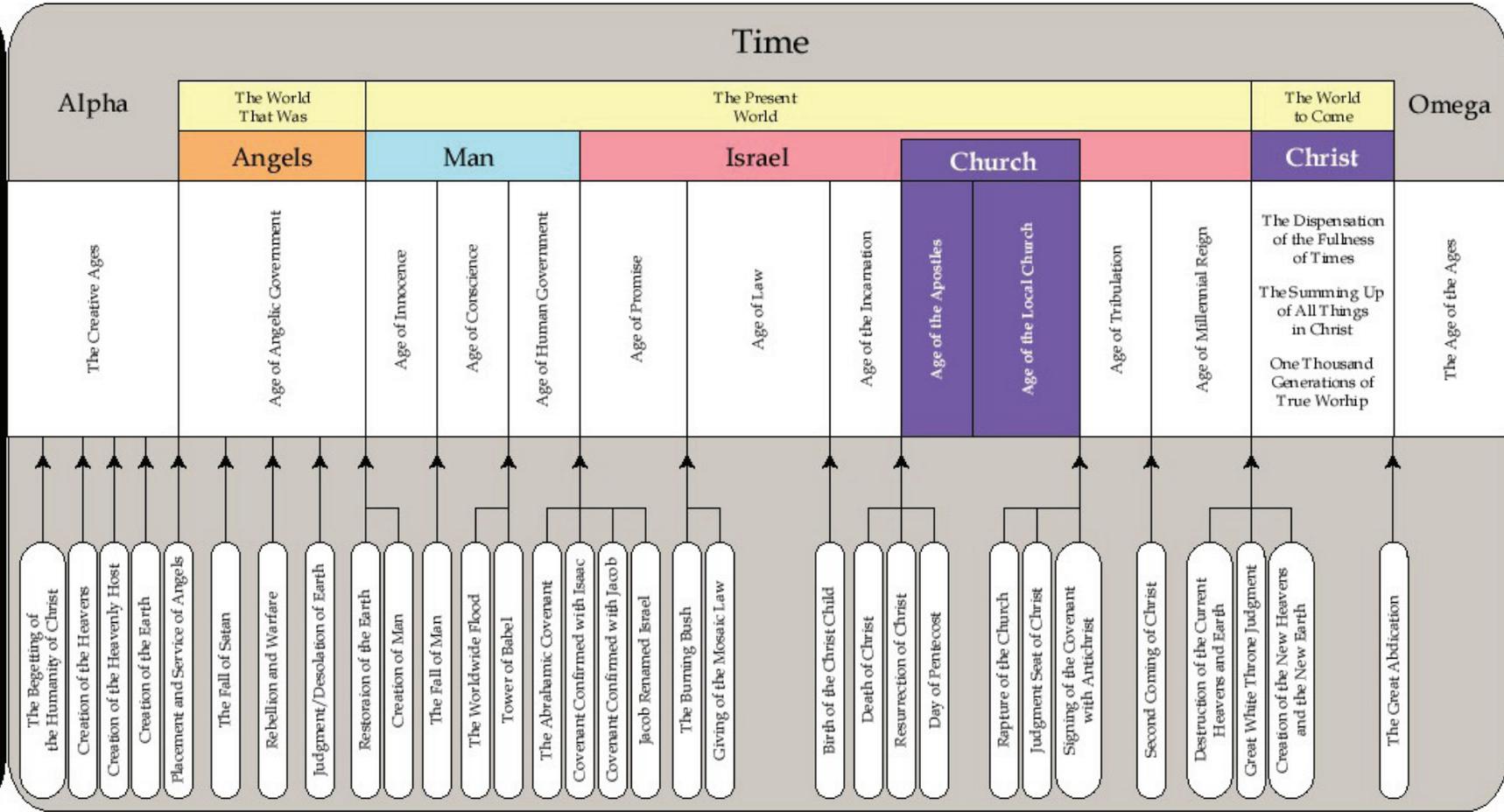
For us right now, stuck in this strange time, waiting for the Rapture and the continuation of the Jewish dispensation, waiting for Christ to come a meet us in the air, what is our role? What is our purpose? What is our admonition? To study. To know God's Word. To grasp God's plan. To graph God's plan.

To be a good οκονόμος. οικονόμος= Stewards. To be good stewards of the Word, so that we might know the plan, that we might execute that plan with our own volition. Moreover, that we become servants of Christ, servants of the plan, servants of the Word of God (1 Corinthians 4:1-4)

- 1 Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.
- 2 In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.
- 3 But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself.
- 4 For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord.

Let us be servants of Christ and stewards of the Mysteries of God. In so doing, we identify ourselves with Christ, prepare for our own divine examination, and enroll ourselves as active participants in the plan for His ultimate glorification

Why? That's why.



Notes