

God's Plan for the Ages

The following study is study of "*God's Plan for Man Down Through the Ages*" – His dealings with men from the beginning to the end of time – *from eternity past to eternity future!*

Honest, sincere individuals have been perplexed with a flood of questions such as, "*What is God's Great Plan and Purpose for Mankind?*" God has revealed His plan – generally and universally known as "*His Plan of Redemption for Mankind.*"

Sincere seekers of truth, as well as skeptics, have, at some time or other, felt led to open the Bible in an effort to find the answer to "*that something*" which cannot be answered apart from God.

They have read of the Rebellion of Angels – The Creation of Man – The Entrance of Sin, with its penalty of physical and spiritual Death – the Promise of a Savior – His Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension – The Promise of His literal, visible Returning – The Devil's Doom and God's Eternal Triumph. *But what is the meaning and purpose of such tremendous issues?*

- "*What bearing do these mystifying events of the Bible revelation have upon the pattern of my every day life?*"
- "*In the affairs of ordinary people like my self, my friends and neighbors – What is it all about?*"

Hundreds of thousands in every generation have asked these questions and, as startling as the truth may be, "*the gates of hell and death*" have closed upon millions who never found the answer!

Why Creation? – Why Angels? – Earth? – Man? – Virgin Birth? – Cross? – Blood – An Empty Tomb? – Judgments? – Hell? – Heaven? – Crowns? – **Why? Why? What's it all about?**

Man getting back to God is the living heartbeat of the Christian Faith; the whole sum and substance of Bible revelation. Amazing as it is, the Eternal and Immutable Plan and Purpose of God can be told in the two wondrous words ***Holy Communion!***

God's Divine plan for man is to be discovered in the unfolding landscape of Bible revelation. Close to the heart of God is a company of sinners brought back into fellowship and communion with His great love. Of all the infinite vastness of God's Creation – "*the heavens and the hosts of therein,*" – blazing suns, constellations, fathomless galaxies and super-galaxies, universe upon universe – Scripture teaches us "*the Lord's portion [God's precious trophy] is His people*" (Deuteronomy 32:9).

- **A Perfect Company**
- **In Harmony with His Perfect Will**
- **To Love Him with a Perfect Love**
- **To Be Like Him and with Him Throughout a Perfect Eternity!**

There are three main ages within the scope of time – the antediluvian age, the present age, and the age to come (the millennium). An age in Scripture is a period of time from one violent or decided change in the earth's surface or condition to another marked change involving the earth's inhabitants. In Matthew 13:39, 49; 2 Corinthians 4:4; and Galatians 1:4 the word “world” should be rendered “age.”

What is God's motivation behind all of His deals with man? Ephesians 2:7 says, “*That in the ages to come He [Almighty God] might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*”

From the Introduction to the Grand Finale of this study, the purpose is that these treasured gems of revelation shine through until there is an understanding that saturates your heart with the blessed realization and meaning of the Eternal *Oneness* of the Redeemer and the Redeemed.

Colossians 1:27, “*They are those to whom God has planned to give a vision of the full wonder and splendor of His secret plan for the sons of men. And this secret is simply this: Christ in you!*”

[Phillips Translation]

The reason God gave His Son was as a Ransom for *Sin*, the primary cause that separated man in the beginning and keeps him separated. In making full atonement for sin, the Redeemer, Christ Jesus, turned the tide of God's wrath in order that the Redeemed might live daily and eternally in fellowship and Holy Communion with His Maker.

Jesus prayed to His Father in John 17:21-23, “*That they [believers] all may be one; as Thou, Father, are in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us...I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect [spiritually mature] in one [in Christ Jesus].*”

When we speak of Holy Communion we immediately think of the communion table, the linen, the tiny classes, the elements, the ordinance, but these words, “*Holy Communion,*” embrace ***the Plan and Purpose of God from Eternity to Eternity!*** The meaning of “*the Sacred Sacrament*” goes back far beyond the table – back to the bosom of the Eternal God, before man became a living soul.

The Bible is a story of God's desire for a family, the story of His creation, His care and protection, and His untiring efforts to win man's love and obedience.

The only way to understand the details of God's Word is to have a clear understanding of it as a whole. The Bible, which is the unfolding of a great plan that was ever in the heart of the eternal God, has a lot more order in it than many seem to suppose.

In the same way that an adventure book states a problem, introduces the characters involved in the problem and then builds its “*story*” around the resolution of the problem, the Bible, after having stated God's problem of obtaining a human family who will love and obey Him, presents the story of God's resolution of His problem.

As a yardstick is divided into “feet” and “inches” so God’s Word divides its story of man’s failure to obey and love God, into seven different “time periods,” or Ages and Dispensations.

These notes are a study of those dispensations

As the architectural plan is dependent on the architect’s specification for the value of its usage, our understanding of God’s plan for man is dependent upon our awareness of the seven periods, sometimes called “ages,” or “dispensations,” clearly outlined in Scripture.

All authoritative information is found within the sacred pages of the Word of God, all other material is to be used merely as a study aid which endeavors to simplify, for the earnest and diligent student, the various parts and divisions of God’s Word.

Bear in mind that this study, nor the readers judgment for that matter, can lay claim to infallibility, for that reason, the reader is invited to take the views of this study and submit them to the test of Scripture and if in his judgment they are not in accordance with the teaching thereof, he is at liberty to reject them. Hence, the main purpose of this study is that the reader be lead, by a perusal of the following notes, to a deeper interest in, and more profound study of, the infallible Word of God.

THE ETERNAL PAST

As we open our Bible and read the first majestic sentence, “*In the beginning God...*” we immediately sense that this Book is different from any other book in the world. The One who is the Theme of the Book, the Purpose of the Book, and the Revelation of the Book – the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who said, “*the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life*” (John 6:63). The Bible is a Living message from the heart of a Living, Loving God. God existed from eternity and will continue to exist for eternity! Before the planets were ever brought into existence, before the angels were created and long before man, **God was!**

Psalms 90:2 states, “*Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God.*”

Psalms 93:2 states, “*O Lord, You have reigned from prehistoric times, from the everlasting past*” [Living Bible].

Micah 5:2 states, “*O Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are but a small Judean village, yet you will be the birthplace of my King who is alive from everlasting ages past*” [Living Bible].

John 1:1-2 states, “*Before anything else existed; there was Christ, with God. He has always been alive and is Himself God.*” [Living Bible]

The Bible teaches that God existed “*from everlasting unto everlasting*” (Psalm 41:13 and 106:48). Jesus speaks of the glory He had “*before the world was*” (John 17:5).

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| See study on, “ <i>The Trinity – God, Three in One</i> ” |
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- Deuteronomy 33:27 speaks of “*The Eternal God, the Father.*”
- Colossians 1:15-19 speaks of “*The Eternal God, the Son;*” and Hebrews 1:2-3, 8.
- Hebrews 9:14 speaks to “*The Eternal God, the Holy Spirit.*”

These three are the only Eternal Beings – and they are One!

THE DATELESS PAST BEFORE ADAM

We know from the genealogies given throughout God's Word that it has been approximately 6,000 years from the time of Adam until now, but what about *before* Adam? How old is the earth?

Reading the first profound declaration of Scripture, “*In the beginning God,*” we immediately sense the blessed truth that this Book is different from any other book in the world. The difference is declared by the One who is the Theme, the Purpose and the Revelation of the Book – the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, said, “*the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life*” (John 6:63). The Bible is the Living Message from the heart of a Living, Loving God.

“*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*” The first profound declaration of revelation is complete and conclusive. The Holy Spirit introduces us immediately to God as the Author and Cause of the beginning of all things. “*In the beginning **God**...*” there is nothing left for human speculation. In spite of all the theories of the ages as to the beginning of the material universe and the origin of life, this is all man has ever known, or ever will know this side of the veil – “*In the beginning God **created**...*” – “*Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them*” (Genesis 2:1).

The fact of a material universe stares every creature in the face, and the Bible contains the only *authoritative* and truly *acceptable* account of its origin. Amazingly brief, but it stands as immutable as its Author. Scientists and geologists may speculate on strata, fossil remains, missing links, and with amazing instruments penetrate farther and farther into the real “*above the blue,*” and draw aside the veil of the ages from all the previously unknown; but still, “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him” (Psalm 25:14).

The World's Wisest have written volumes of theories and conjectures as to how the Universe came into being; but “*Though faith we understand that the worlds were made of things which do appear*” (Hebrews 11:3). The Universe (or better, as the Hebrew correctly states, “*The hosts of heaven*” [Deuteronomy 17:3], for astronomers tell us that we are living in “*a universe of universes*”) was *created*. The word “*create*” is translated from the Hebrew word, “*bara*” and means “*the divine and sovereign act of bringing into existence **that which was not,***” and is used solely in association with Deity. We use the term “*something out of nothing*” to loosely – the Universe did not come from “*nothing;*” it came from God. I owes its existence to God's Will and God's Word alone – as the Psalmist declares that “*by the breath of His mouth [God's mouth] He commanded and they [the hosts of heaven] were created*” (Psalm 104:30).

In the original Hebrew language, the One to whom we are immediately introduced is “*Elohim,*” the first form of the Divine name in the Bible. Although conveying a singular meaning it is plural in form, bringing us immediately to the concept of the Unity of the Godhead. While

there is one, and only one, true and living God, there are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; and these three are *one* (1 John 5:7).

Can we explain the eternal existence of God? Hebrews 11:1 tells us that “*faith is the evidence of things not seen;*” therefore, no explanation is given or needed to *prove* the existence of God. In the Spiritual Realm, the Realm of the Eternal, “*proof*” is not sought as evidence – Faith is the evidence. It is neither Reason, Knowledge, nor Wisdom, but Faith alone that puts Man on speaking terms with God. *Faith* is where the whole course of Bible revelation begins – “*he that cometh to God must believe that He is*” (Hebrews 11:6). This is the challenge that calls whosoever will to make the Venture of Faith. When a man takes God at His Word and by Faith believes that He is, and has an honest desire in his heart to know Him, the Holy Spirit immediately brings about the introduction, and makes God real and understandable to the seeking soul. Jesus said, “*If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God...*” (John 7:17).

“***In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.***” In the very first verse of the Bible, Genesis 1:1, is the record of a conclusive act; the heavens and the earth were brought into being by the Divine declaration, “*Let it be so – and it was so!*”

In Genesis 1:2 we find a subsequent event not a continued description of the first, complete and conclusive creative act. The Hebrew word which is translated “and” – the first word of verse 2 – is a conjunction, used 200 times in the first two chapters of Genesis. It always refers to independent acts. Verse 2 states, “*And the earth was (became) without form and void.*”

Tremendous issues revolve around this simple word “*became.*” If the original creation of the material universe was shapeless chaotic mass, “*without form and void*” gradually developing through successive stages and ages to the present perfect order, then the Theory of Evolution – [Which, in substance, teaches that a zoophyte – begat a trilobite – that began a pollywog – that begat a tadpole – that begat a fish – that begat a reptile – that begat a baboon – that begat – *something* that got lose – and that “*missing link begat*” your great-great grand daddy] This false assumption has blasted the simple faith of millions, has much to support it. But, in the light of God's Word, and of that understanding which “*faith alone*” can bring to the human heart, just the reverse is true. The “*In the beginning*” to the original creation was a perfect finished work; and for some reason, greatly veiled to us, but clearly known to God, the Earth was brought to desolation, darkness, emptiness and chaos – it became “*waste and void.*”

Some calamity caused the earth to become desolate and waste!

“*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,*” however, something caused God's creation to “*become*” void, desolate and waste. How long the earth remained in this state, we are not told. Scripture is a *revelation*, not an *explanation!* How far back this dateless past before man was, no man knows. We only know that the earth “*became without form and void.*”

These words, “*without form*” and “*void,*” are translated from the Hebrew meaning “*desolation*” and “*emptiness,*” and are found together only in two other passages, both expressing “*total ruin*” caused by God's displeasure – Isaiah 34:11 and Jeremiah 4:23. That this verse (Genesis 1:2) is not a description of the original creation should be settled forever by the words of Isaiah, “*He [God] created it [the earth] not in vain [desolation or waste], He formed it to be inhabited*” (Isaiah 45:18).

The question that naturally arises is, “*Is it possible for us to we know when or why the earth became waste and void?*” The answer to that question gives the Bible-believer an answer to archaeological discoveries. How long a time elapsed between God’s Original and Perfect Creation and the scene of desolation and darkness we find in Genesis 1:2 we are not told. But that some great cataclysm he took place, greatly changing the earth’s physical beauty and reducing it to the Bible description of chaos is beyond all doubt. The cause of thus great upheaval is all-important in its relation to “*The Story of the Ages,*” and as we search the Scriptures we find that God’s Word is not without strong intimation that the Earth, in its original beauty, was the dominion of one called, “*Lucifer,*” (correctly translated, “*light-bearer*”) in Isaiah 14:12, named “*the son of the morning,* or “*shining one.*”

This passage in Isaiah 14:12-14 reads as, “*How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground--mighty though you were against the nations of the world. For you said to yourself, "I will ascend to heaven and rule the angels. I will take the highest throne. I will preside on the Mount of Assembly far away in the north. I will climb to the highest heavens and be like the Most High"* [Living Bible].

This passage refers to a period before Adam, when “*spirits beings*” ruled the world and was, no doubt, what seems to have been a probation period for angels, to test them as men are tested today. This period – between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2 – could have run for thousands, even millions, of years in its course before the creation described in the first two chapters of Genesis.

Isaiah 14:12-14 reveals that “*Lucifer*” (the Devil) was the one who brought about the earth’s ruin. At one time, long before man was created, he ruled the earth. His kingdom would have had to be on earth because, according to verse 13, he attempted to “*ascend above the heights of the clouds.*” Because Lucifer was already a *fallen creature* when Adam and Eve were created, this passage in Isaiah 14 had to have taken place *before* man was on earth.

Sin came into Lucifer’s heart because of his desire to exalt himself about Almighty god. Scripture tells us that Lucifer even led “*angels*” in rebellion against God – (Revelation 12:4 suggests that it was a third of the angels of heaven) – however, of course, he was defeated.

Ezekiel 28:13-18 speaks of Lucifer when it states, “*Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God – [Note, by its description, we know that this Garden of Eden is different than where Adam and Eve] – were every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.*”

Jeremiah 4:23-27 also depicts a scene from the dateless past before Adam when it states, *“I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, and by his fierce anger. For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end.”*

This passage in Jeremiah 4 tells of a time when *“heaven had no light – there were no people – or birds – and all the cities were broken down by the presence of the Lord.”* This could **not** have been the flood in Noah's day because, in his day, the earth still had *“form”* and was not *“void”* there were still lights in the heavens – and – there were still animals and fruits on the earth – therefore, this passage **has** to refer to some time before man was on earth – in the dateless past before Adam.

During this *dateless past before Adam*, *“spirit-beings”* ruled the earth and, evidently, it was a probationary period designed to test the angels before trusting them in an eternal state. Thousands upon thousand, maybe even millions upon millions – of years may have run their course between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. This reality is where Scripture not only gives all the room, and time, that scientific research seems to require for the development of the earth's surface.

One thing is sure, 1 Corinthians 15:45 tells us plainly that *“Adam was the **first** man”* and Genesis 3:20 says, *“Adam called his wife's name Eve, because **she was the mother of all living.**”* And Acts 17:26 goes so far as to proclaim, *“God hath **made of one blood all nations of men** for to dwell on the face of the earth.”* After the flood, Genesis 9:19 says, *“...of them [that is, the 3 sons of Noah] was the whole earth overspread.”* Therefore, if we are to take the Bible at face value, Scripture teaches that God created Adam and Eve as mankind's first parents, and that there was never a race of *human* beings before them. In fact, there is not one particle of scientific evidence that there ever were any human beings on the earth before Adam!