

GOD'S PLAN FOR THE AGES

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

By

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE RETURN OF CHRIST IN GLORY

We have seen in our former studies that, even as the first coming of Christ into the world nearly two thousand years ago covered a period of time — from Bethlehem to Calvary — so also will His second coming cover a period of time — from the translation of the church to His return in glory with the church to establish His millennial kingdom in the earth. We have seen that during this brief period there will be enacted an earthly and a heavenly scene: while the judgment seat of Christ and the marriage supper of the Lamb are taking place in heaven, the seventieth week of Daniel will be running its course in the earth.

“The Sun Of Righteousness” Shall “Arise” (Malachi 4:2)

This darkest period of the world's history, this **“time of Jacob's trouble,”** will be brought to an end when **“the Sun of righteousness”** shall **“arise with healing in his wings.”** Then the darkness will be dispelled by **“the brightness of his glory,”** as the Son of God returns with His saints to rule. He will hear the cry of His people, Israel, in their time of great tribulation. Then He will arise from the marriage feast and come down to deliver them.

“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins” (Romans 11:26, 27).

With the return of Christ, the **“times of the Gentiles”** will come to a close, as the last Great War ends with the battle of Armageddon.

In this terrible battle the King of kings and Lord of lords will overcome the Antichrist and purify a war-torn and sin-weary world. **“The beast . . . and with him the false prophet”** shall be **“cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone”** (Revelation 19:20). Satan shall be bound a thousand years (Revelation 20:2). And **“the God of heaven”** shall **“set up a kingdom”** **“wherein dwelleth righteousness.”**

In our next study we want to consider this glorious kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Today we shall see what the Bible teaches concerning His personal, visible, bodily return in glory to establish that kingdom of peace.

“The God Of Heaven” Shall “Set Up A Kingdom” (Daniel 2:44)

Already we have sought to outline the events which will follow one another in rapid succession during the seventieth week of Daniel. Satan’s masterpiece, the Antichrist, will be worshipped by those who receive **“the mark of the beast”** in that day. But Gentile dominion, which began with Nebuchadnezzar, will speedily be brought to an end as the Son of David comes in glory to reign.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Daniel gives us a picture of what will happen to **“the kings of the earth”** and their kingdoms when Jesus comes again. In the second chapter of his prophecy he outlines the full extent of Gentile dominion, beginning with the Babylonian Empire under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar, and ending with the revived Roman Empire just prior to our Lord’s return. History has seen the fourth kingdom of **“the iron rule”** divided into two parts, as typified by the two legs of the image, symbolic of the Eastern and the “Western divisions of the Roman Empire. But the last stage of that kingdom is yet to be fulfilled in the revived Roman Empire, as foreshadowed by the ten toes of the image, **“part of iron, and part of clay.”**

The ten kings of this coming world empire will give allegiance to the Antichrist; they will form a league or confederacy of nations, of which he will be the head. The **“iron rule”** of autocracy will be side by side with the **“clay”** of democracy – the will of the people.

“They shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed” (Daniel 2:43-44).

The Lord Jesus is the smiting **“stone . . . cut out of the mountain without hands.”** And as Daniel beheld the vision, he saw the stone smile **“the image upon his feet.”**

“Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth” (Daniel 2:35).

Now a mountain in Scripture represents a kingdom. And the Word of God often refers to Christ in the figure of a **“stone.”** Moses smote the rock in the wilderness, and the thirsty Israelites drank from the stream that came forth from the smitten rock. Paul, referring to the typical significance of this event, tells us in plain words: **“That Rock was Christ”** (I Corinthians 10:4).

“Smitten of God, and afflicted” for our sins, He became the Fountain of living water to the thirsty soul, the **“Rock of Ages,”** cleft for sinning, erring man. Again, the Psalmist prophesied, saying: **“The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner”** (Psalm 118:22); and the Lord Jesus applied these words to Himself (Matthew 21:42).

Rejected by Israel nearly two thousand years ago, He became the foundation Stone of the church. (See Matthew 16:18; Romans 9:32, 33; I Corinthians 3:11; I Peter 2:4-8). And as the smiting **“stone,”** He will put an end to Gentile world power when He comes in glory to reign.

Christ Himself is the stone **“cut out without hands”** – this will be the work of God, not of man. And His kingdom, as a **“great mountain,”** shall fill **“the whole earth.”** Isaiah uses a similar figure when he says concerning it:

“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9).

In that day **“the God of Heaven”** shall **“set up a kingdom.”** My friend out of Christ, will you not drink of the **“living water”** that flows from **“the Rock of Ages”** before **“that great and terrible day of the Lord”** comes? He was **“smitten of God, and afflicted,”** that you might behold and share His glory forever.

Do not wait for the smiting **“stone”** to fall in judgment. He is **“the God of all grace,”** but He is also holy. *And He must judge sin.*

“Behold, The Lord Cometh With Ten Thousands Of His Saints” (Jude 14)

“Enoch . . . the seventh from Adam, prophesied . . . saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (Jude 14, 15).

Enoch, who was translated **“that he not see death,”** looked down the centuries and saw the Lord coming **“with ten thousands of his saints.”** And who are these saints? They are the bride of Christ, His church, which will have been translated, forever to be with Him and to share His glory.

“Behold, he cometh with clouds” (Revelation 1:7). And **“when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory”** (Matthew 25:31).

Not only will myriads upon myriads of His redeemed saints come with Him in glory, but **“all the holy angels”** will also appear with Him when He comes again.

“When he (the Father) bringeth in the first begotten (from the dead — His Son) into the world [inhabited earth], he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him” (Hebrews 1:6).

Daniel also tells us of the hosts who shall stand before **“the Ancient of days”** when He returns: **“Thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him”** in the vision Daniel saw (Daniel 7:10).

My Christian friend, since you have put your faith in the atoning work of Christ on Calvary, you will not only see Him when He comes as **“the bright and morning star”** to take away His church; you will also **“appear with him in glory”** when, as **“the Sun of righteousness,”** He arises to bring light and glory and peace to this earth.

“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3:4).

“His Feet Shall Stand . . . Upon The Mount Of Olives” Zechariah 14:4

When Jesus comes again, He will bring His saints with Him; the holy angels will attend Him; Gentile dominion will come to a speedy, certain end; and His chosen people, Israel, will receive Him as their Messiah and King. He will remember His covenant with Abraham and with David, to fulfill it, even as He said.

We have seen that Israel, during the reign of the Antichrist, will refuse to worship his image which will be set up in **“the holy place”** of the temple in Jerusalem. Such blasphemy will be, to Israel, **“the abomination of desolation”**; and from it she will turn away. We have seen that the Antichrist will, in turn, persecute the Jews, and that **“the Great Tribulation”** will run its course. We have seen also that **“for the elect’s sake”** — for Israel’s sake — the last three and one-half years of the seventieth week of Daniel will be shortened. Jesus himself will come down to deliver His ancient people, Israel, when He comes in glory to reign.

“His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives” (Zechariah 14:4).

“And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends” (Zechariah 13:6).

“They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (Zechariah 12:10).

“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him” (Revelation 1:7).

The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah will be the prayer of penitent Israel in that day. Though he will not come as the Man of Sorrows, **“despised and rejected of men”** — He will come with power and great glory — yet Israel will look back to Calvary, and see that on the cross she crucified her Lord. She will see Him as her Saviour and she will **“mourn for him,”** saying:

“We hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:3-5).

“This Same Jesus . . . Shall . . . Come” Acts 1:11

The Christ of Calvary is the Christ of Glory. The smiting **“stone”** upon Gentile dominion, the **“stone which the builders (Israel) refused,”** the **“chief corner stone”** upon which the church is built, is none other than Jesus of Nazareth, the eternal Son of the eternal God. Concerning Him **“the prophets”** wrote, testifying **“beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow”** (I Peter 1:10, 11).

Then at the Incarnation God came down to dwell among men, to die for their sins, and to be raised again for their justification. When He ascended into heaven, His disciples **“looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up.”** And **“behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven”** (Acts 1:10, 11).

“This same Jesus” is coming again! Even as Thomas saw the wounded hands and feet and side, so also will Israel **“look upon”** Him **“whom they pierced.”** His return will be personal, bodily, visible; and **“every eye shall see him.”**

“This same Jesus” is coming again, but not in humiliation, not to be despised and rejected and betrayed. He is coming **“in like manner”** as He went up into heaven nearly two thousand years ago. He is coming **“with clouds”** in great power and great glory.

He is coming as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

“All Kings Shall Fall Down Before Him” Psalm 72:11

If you want to see a picture of the returning King, read Revelation 19:11-16. Here John writes: **“I saw heaven opened.”** Stephen was the last to see the heavens opened, but once again **“the clouds shall be rolled back as a scroll,”** and the King shall descend. Here He is called **“Faithful and True”**; before Him all that is unfaithful and false will quail. **“His eyes”** will be **“as a flame of fire,”** searching out iniquity, purifying the earth with righteous judgment. Those eyes which wept at the tomb of Lazarus, those eyes which were filled with tears over the unbelief of His beloved city, will flash with the flame of sincerity and truth and indignation against all that is corrupt and unholy and untrue. Little wonder the wicked will cry for the rocks and the hills to hide them from those all-seeing eyes in that day.

“On his head” will be **“many crowns.”** Nearly two thousand years ago that head was crowned with thorns; but when He comes again, it will be as King of kings. And He shall have **“a name written, that no man”** shall know, **“but he himself.”** When He walked the earth as the lowly Jesus, He revealed unto men the name of God; but when He comes again, it will be with a cold and terrible reserve toward His enemies. Moreover, **“his vesture”** shall be **“dipped in blood,”** the blood of his adversaries — **“the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him . . . and against his army”** (Revelation 19:19).

“And his name is called The Word of God.” There is no question as to His identity. In John 1:1, 14 we read that Jesus, the eternal Son, is called **“The Word of God.”** He is the Living Word, of whom the written Word speaks. And when He comes again, He will judge all men by His eternal Word, described here and in other portions of Scripture as **“a sharp, two-edged sword”** (verse 15; compare Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 6:17).

Today that Word invites sinners to accept the Saviour; when Jesus comes again, that **“sharp sword”** will **“smite the nations”** which have rebelled against Him.

“The armies . . . in heaven” — angels and saints — will come with Him in the day of His glory, as we have already seen, and as verse fourteen clearly states. His mighty army will meet the army of the Antichrist, arrayed against Him.

Then He will tread **“the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”**

It is an awful picture we have here. And **“it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,”** unsaved, unclothed with His righteousness. (See Hebrews 10:31). My brother, **“now is the day of salvation.”** Do not neglect the most important of all human experiences. **“Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way”** (Psalm 2:12). As **“King of kings, and Lord of lords,”** He is coming again.

The day of grace will then be over; and you will have to meet **“the Judge of all the earth.”** He has paid the penalty for your sins on Calvary; you need only accept His free gift of salvation.

**“There Shall Come In The Last Days Scoffers . . . Saying,
Where Is The Promise Of His Coming?” II Peter 3:3, 4**

There are many today who scoff at the doctrine of the personal, bodily, visible, imminent, premillennial coming of Christ; but God said it should be so. (Read carefully the third chapter of II Peter, especially verses 3-10).

Such as these are saying, **“Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation”** (verse 4).

“But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (verses 8, 9).

Satan has succeeded in causing many to scoff by mingling the teaching of the second coming of Christ with different forms of fanatical and false teaching. Thus he has sought to bring the doctrine into disrepute. He wants to rob men of the quickening, purifying power and zeal which inevitably accompany the preaching of our Lord's return. But Satan always offers a counterfeit or a perverted doctrine.

Why, therefore, should orthodox, evangelical Christians give up this **“blessed hope”** and sure promise of Christ’s literal kingdom on earth, just because many cults have incorporated some truth regarding the Lord’s return with much error regarding this and other doctrines, even setting dates for His second coming?

The kingdom of the Messiah was the theme of the prophets.

The Lord Jesus taught plainly, saying: **“As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be”** (Matthew 24:27).

Paul, Peter, James, John, Jude — all the apostles wrote much upon this theme. There are two hundred and sixty chapters in the New Testament, with three hundred and eighteen references to Christ’s second coming. Some of the greatest evangelists and ministers of the Gospel in modern times have cherished this **“blessed hope”** — John and Charles Wesley, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, D. L. Moody, James Hudson Taylor, R. A. Torrey, and a host of others whose labors God has abundantly honored.

Yet thousands of the Lord’s people have never heard a sermon upon this great event which seems to us so near at hand; or if they have heard the subject mentioned from the pulpit, it has been only to hear it cynically ridiculed or classed as fanaticism and heresy. Let us not heed Satan’s wiles, as he seeks to rob the Christian of **“that blessed hope,”** and as he seeks to lull the sinner to sleep by a false sense of security regarding things to come. The Word of God abounds in warning to the sinner and in comfort to the saint, based on the promise of the sure return of the Lord Jesus to earth.

“The Coming Of The Lord Draweth Nigh” James 5:8

Moreover, **“the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”**

Space forbids our dwelling here upon **“the signs of the times”**; but many fulfilled prophecies point to the soon coming of our Lord:

- **“perilous times”** in the earth,
- increased lawlessness and godlessness,
- the wave of apostasy in professing Christendom,
- the return of the Jews to Palestine in unbelief,
- the political conditions which make a confederacy of nations on the ground of the old Roman Empire a not unlikely fact even in our own day.

These are some of the **“signs of the times”** which our Lord Himself gave as evidence of the fact that the Church Age is rapidly drawing to a close.

“Every Man That Hath This Hope . . . Purifieth Himself” I John 3:3

It is a sanctifying truth. It grips the soul and changes the life.

It converts idle Christians into zealous soul-winners. The thought that, at any moment, the church may be caught away to be with Christ, makes the child of God want to be ready for His coming. The desire to snatch sinners as brands from the burning before it is too late makes one go out into the highways and byways to win men and women and boys and girls to Christ. It leads to personal evangelism in its purest, most apostolic form. No truth causes a man to hold so loosely to the things of time as does this doctrine.

“Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (I John 3:3).

“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” (I John 2:28).

“Behold, I come quickly,” the risen Lord is saying to us today.

My friend, can you pray from an eager heart the last prayer recorded in the Word of God, uttered in response to this promise of the glorified Christ? It is the prayer of all **“who love his appearing”**:

“Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).

~ end of chapter 13 ~

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