

GOD'S PLAN FOR THE AGES

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

By

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

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CHAPTER ONE

EARTH'S EARLIEST AGES

We begin today a study of God's great plan of the ages, setting forth a comprehensive view of His dealings with man from the beginning to the end of all things.

There is more order and classifications in the Bible than many people seem to suppose; in fact, the Bible is the unfolding of a great plan that was ever in the heart of the eternal God. And the only way to understand the details of His Word is to have a clear understanding of it as a whole.

When I first came to this country to live in Chicago, a friend led me out to make me familiar with the city. He first took me to the top of the highest building and showed me the city as a whole. He pointed out to me the north side, the south, the west, and Lake Michigan on the east. Having thus fixed in my mind the plan of the city as a whole, I did not find it difficult to learn the details as to streets, buildings, and places of special interest. And so it is with the Word of God.

It is not my plan in this series of addresses to give a detailed study of the Bible, but rather to put before you the outline of the ages, beginning with the past eternity, and following God's methods with man through time, even unto the future eternity.

We begin this morning with the past eternity, and revert to the time before there was a universe, before a planet was ever brought into existence, before even the angels were created. We go into the past eternity to find out those things that have neither beginning nor end, and we behold four facts of utmost importance rising before our vision:

- (1) The eternal God;
- (2) the eternal Son;
- (3) the eternal Spirit; and
- (4) the eternal purpose.

The Eternal God

“The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deuteronomy 33:27).

This familiar and much-loved quotation from the book of Deuteronomy contains far more than a precious promise to the child of God. It is a beautiful promise of strength to the weary, of assurance to the faltering; but it is more; it is also a plain statement of the fact that God is eternal!

The eye of faith looks up and beholds Him.

There He stands, a living personage — not an influence, but possessing all the attributes of personality — living, moving, and having His being. He wills; He loves; He looks into the very heart of man, into His secret thoughts.

He is all-powerful, all-wise, all-loving; and yet He is a holy God who cannot bear the presence of sin, and demands that man be clothed in the righteousness that He alone can give before he can stand in His presence.

The Eternal Son

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:1, 2, 14).

Just as words express thoughts, even so the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son, expresses to sinful man the very thought of God toward him, and that thought is one of forgiving love. And the Word of God who was made flesh and dwelt among us is eternal. **“In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was God.”**

Seven hundred years before He **“was made flesh, and dwelt among us,”** the prophet Micah wrote concerning Him, saying He was to be **“ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”** (See Micah 5:2). This is the One who, according to Micah as he wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, was to be born in Bethlehem, as this passage clearly states. The Son of God is eternal. **“In the beginning was the Word.”** His **“goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”**

Once more the eye of faith looks up and beholds Him, the second Person of the Trinity, co-equal with the Father, co-eternal with Him, with a glory and a majesty uncreated and essentially His own.

When He was on earth, having come to the close of His earthly ministry, and having Calvary's cross, He prayed to His Father, saying:

“Now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (John 17:5).

The Eternal Spirit

God the Father “**so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life**” (John 3:16).

God the Son “**so loved the world**” that He came to die on the cross as a Substitute for sinful man who could not save himself. And it was “**through the eternal Spirit**” that the eternal Son presented a sacrifice acceptable to the eternal Father when He “**offered himself without spot to God**” as an atonement for the souls of all men who will believe in His finished work on Calvary. (See Hebrews 9:14).

“**The eternal Spirit**” is the Holy Spirit of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and with the Son. He is a living Person, not an influence. He bears all the marks of personality; and repeatedly in His farewell discourse to His disciples, as recorded in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of John, the Lord Jesus referred to Him as a living Person — a Comforter, a Teacher, a Guide, a convicting and a quickening Power because He is the Holy Spirit of God.

The Eternal Triune God — God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are the only three Persons who are eternal — and these three are one God.

Concerning Him Moses wrote to his people, saying, “**Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord**” (Deuteronomy 6:4). And yet this same Moses referred to the Trinity when he wrote previously, recording the story of creation, and putting into the mouth of the Creator these significant words: “**And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness**” (Genesis 1:26).

It was the Holy Trinity that Isaiah saw when he beheld “**the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up**” (Isaiah 6:1); and it was concerning the Holy Trinity that he heard the seraphim speak as “**one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory**” (Isaiah 6:3).

These are only a few of the many quotations from Scripture that might be given to prove the doctrine of the Trinity — the eternal, triune God.

This doctrine is not contrary to reason; it is above reason.

One day we shall understand the great doctrine of the Godhead, as we cannot now understand it, possessed as we are with these finite minds; one day we shall understand how God can be three Persons, yet one God.

Some years ago a weak-minded boy, who was never known to utter a rational sentence, while on his death bed, looked up and spoke these amazing words:

“I see — I see — what do I see? Three in one, and One in three; And the One in the middle — He died for me.”

This is all we can say as we think of the Trinity, no matter how profound our intellect may be. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God; and the second Person in the Trinity died for our sins, nailing them to His cross.

The Eternal Purpose

We are called, says Paul, “**according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord**” (Eph. 3:11).

“**The eternal purpose**” is, of course, according to the eternal plan which was ever in the heart of God. In other words, God foresaw what sin would do; and He had a plan that would elevate lost, but redeemed, sinners into union with His Son.

Listen to the reassuring words of the Son, spoken in prayer to the Father shortly before He went to the cross:

“**Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one**” (John 17:20-23).

The eternal God, the eternal Son, the eternal Spirit, the eternal purpose — these only are eternal!

Angels are not eternal. There was a time when the archangel before the throne of God did not exist. Angels are God's creatures, having had a beginning.

Matter is not eternal. Scientists may speak of “that eternal matter,” but there is no such thing. Only God — the triune God — and His eternal purpose have had no beginning and shall have no end.

The Original Creation

Let us look now at the chart we are using in this study, noting that part which we have called “The Original Creation.”

In Genesis 1:1 we read: “**In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.**” Verses one and two of Genesis gives us the only account of the creation found in the Word of God. “**In the beginning . . .**”

When was the beginning? How far back into the past does that statement take us? Please note that there is no reference here in this opening verse of Genesis to the six days' work. That comes later, as we shall see.

Many people imagine the Bible teaches that the earth was created in six solar days, but nowhere does the Bible say so.

Some time ago I was called to see a college girl regarding spiritual things. She told me she could not believe the Bible for various reasons, one of which was that she could not believe the world was created in six days. "When I told her that the Bible made no such statement, she had difficulty in believing me.

The Bible does say that in six days the Lord "**made**" heaven and earth, but there is a difference between the words "**made**" and "**created**." "To create" is to bring into existence out of nothing. "To make" is to take pre-existing matter and change its form.

The latter is what the Lord did in six days.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

Chaos

How beautiful this earth must have been "**in the beginning**"!

Before sin entered to mar and destroy, how beautiful it must have been! But proceeding further, we read: "**And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep**" (Genesis 1:2). The word "**was**" is translated in other parts of Scripture "*became*," and may read: "*The earth became without form, and void.*" This is the thought implied, as we learn from Isaiah 45:18: "**For thus said the Lord that created the heavens: God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain (or void), he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord, and there is none else.**"

God created the earth not in vain, or void. If He created it not in vain, or waste, or void, then the original creation must have become so by some catastrophe. What was that catastrophe? The Scripture is not silent regarding it.

In Ezekiel 28:12-19 we have a description of Lucifer, who, through his fall, became Satan. Among other things said about him is this:

"Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; 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 . . . Thou hast sinned . . . 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" (See Ezekiel 28:12-19).

The description here is entirely different from that of the Eden in which Adam and Eve were placed. This is evidently a description of the original creation — and Lucifer was in that Eden before his fall.

Isaiah 14:12-17 tells of Lucifer's fall. It tells us how he said in his heart:

“I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; J will be like the most high” (verses 13, 14).

Most likely Lucifer was at the head of the original creation when he made this utterance. Because of this sin he fell; and to his fall the Lord Jesus referred when He said in Luke 10:18: **“I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.”** God cast him out. He became Satan. And just as this earth was affected later when Adam fell, so also the earth became waste and void at the fall of Lucifer. As already inferred, we have reason to believe from Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14, that God had made Lucifer the head of the original creation; and that his fall and degradation brought about the catastrophe that caused the original creation to become waste and void.

Renovation

How long the earth remained in this chaotic state, we do not know — many years perhaps — possibly millions of years. But the chaotic earth was not forsaken by God; for we read that **“the Spirit of God moved (or brooded) upon the face of the waters”** (Genesis 1:2).

From verse 4 to the close of chapter one we have the account of the renovation, in which God made the earth — reformed it, refashioned it, and placed man upon it. The order of this reformation is plainly stated:

- (1) light;
- (2) firmament;
- (3) earth and seas;
- (4) sun, moon, and stars;
- (5) fish and fowl;
- (6) cattle, creeping things, beasts, and man.

This is the only scriptural interpretation of these opening chapters of the Word of God; and it is not contrary to the laws of science. God is the God of science and law and order. And His Word will bear the lens of science and research!

Very clearly the Scriptures teach that God renovated a chaotic earth; and having brought order out of chaos, He created a new being — man — and gave him dominion over the renovated earth.

It was this authority given unto man that evidently stirred Satan's jealousy; for it was man who supplanted him in the dominion he had held over the earth before his fall.

God's Plan of Redemption in Shadow and Type

Now let us consider the typical significance of all that has been said in regard to the original creation, chaos, and renovation, because these things do have a typical significance, and foreshadow what was later to be God's dealing with man. We have here the history of man before the fall and God's plan of redemption set forth in shadow and in type. The original creation, as it came from the hands of God, was perfect; but through sin it became chaotic, waste, and void — and this because of man's desire to be something God had never intended him to be. All sin springs from the “*I will*” as set over against *God's will*.

But as the earth was not forsaken by God, neither was man; for as “**the Spirit of God moved (or brooded) upon the face of the waters,**” so He brooded over the human race, with the eternal plan and purpose of bringing beauty and Godlikeness out of chaos and ruin. As God said, “**Let there be light,**” at the time of the renovation, so He says at the conversion of every man, “*Let there be light.*”

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Light of God! And as He divided the light from the darkness, so He does today. There is an impassable chasm between the darkness of sin and the light of life in Christ Jesus — impassable except by faith in His atoning work on Calvary's cross.

My brother, has God ever spoken the words, “*Let there be light,*” to your soul?

If you want that light, look into the face of Jesus, the eternal son of God. In Him you will see the Light of the world, revealing to you what sin is, who God is, and what is the only way to God. When you allow the Light to dawn in your soul, you are separated from the darkness, separated from everything the darkness suggests. You become a child of light and begin your journey toward the city of light, of which the Apostle John wrote in Revelation 21:23; 22:5, saying:

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof . . . And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light.”

What is recorded concerning the events of the fourth day is very significant:

“And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also . . .” (Genesis 1:14-19).

Will you please note that the sun, moon, and stars were set in the heavens “**for signs, and for seasons**”?

We understand the meaning of the word “**seasons,**” but what is the significance of the “**signs**”?

Is it not to foreshadow the relation of God's people, the children of light, to the Lord Jesus, the Light of the world and **“the Sun of righteousness”**?

Figuratively speaking, the sun might be thought of as representing Christ; the moon, the church; the stars, individual believers. Even as the sun rules the day and the moon rules the night, so also Christ, **“the Sun of righteousness, will one day rise with healing in his wings”**; and in the meantime, the church shines in a darkened world during the night of sin.

Moreover, as the moon reflects the rays of the sun when the sun is beyond human vision, so also the church reflects a glory not her own, the glory of Christ, her Light, during this age when He is beyond human vision, except to the eye of faith. The planets also are set in relation to the sun, to be controlled by it, and to have their orbits fixed by its power. Likewise, every child of God is saved, filled with light, and set in relation to the Son of God, in Him to live and move and have his being. How marvelously this picture suggests the relationship between Christ and the church, which is His body!

In Jude 13 we read of certain ones that they are **“wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.”** This is a graphic picture of unconverted people who have never been placed in the right relationship to **“the Sun of righteousness.”** They are like stars torn away from their orbits, heading for eternal darkness. My friend, are you in this class?

When I was a lad, the people in the community where I lived were greatly stirred by the appearance of Halley's Comet. I was told that it appeared in our heavens only once every seventy years. I asked in my childish wonderment where it had been all this time, and was informed that after an appearance in our heavens it rushes off into space, away from the sun, travelling thousands of miles a minute, on and on, away from the sun.

I was told that after this comet went on and on, away from the sun for seventy years, then the pull of the sun would bring it back. Again, I raised the question, “Suppose it never came back, but just went on and on and on?” And the answer was that it would then go farther and farther into darkness, farther and farther away from the sun.

My brother, this is a picture of every unsaved man.

God at the beginning set him in a right relationship to Himself. Sin entered, and turned man's face toward darkness — and his face has been in that direction ever since. Unless a man is regenerated, he will spend the eternal ages in outer darkness. Let me ask you, in God's name, to turn right-about-face, accept God's Light — the Lord Jesus Christ — and be placed in a relationship to Him that can never be disturbed. Then you will spend eternity in His presence, in that city of light. **“And there is no night there!”**

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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