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**THE TRUTH ABOUT  
GOD'S PLAN FOR  
HISTORY**

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# INTRODUCTION

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*“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”  
(Colossians 3:2)*

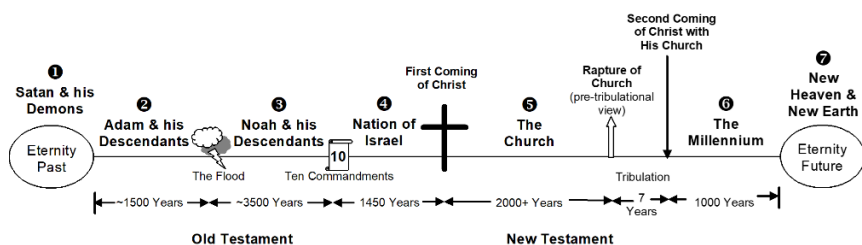
If you study the whole Bible, you’ll see a recurring theme—the story of God’s unfailing love and His desire to have that love reciprocated by His creation. In case after case throughout history, we see God creating (or selecting) a group of beings with free will for the purpose of returning His love through obedience and worship. Unfortunately, time and time again, we see God’s creation rebelling against Him, walking away from Him and being disobedient.

In the Bible, we see this repeating pattern happen six times throughout history—first with Satan and his demons; second with Adam and Eve prior to Noah; third with the descendants of Noah; fourth with the Jewish people; fifth with the Church; and sixth with the people living during Christ’s kingdom on earth (referred to as the Millennium). It is after this sixth and final rebellion that God will judge creation, destroy the existing heaven and earth and start over again a seventh time, by creating a new heaven and a new earth.

This final time the Bible says will be perfect and will last for eternity.

## GOD'S PLAN FOR HISTORY

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All of the events described in the Bible and centuries past have happened in accordance with this plan and this is the central theme of the Bible. The purpose of this booklet is to explain how this theme weaves throughout the Bible story and gives us a view of God's plan for history. Below is a summary of these key events which will be developed fully in the following chapters.

1. **Satan & Demons:** What's important about eternity past is that Adam and Eve were not the first beings to be created or to sin against God. The creation of the earth is not the beginning on God's eternal timeline. Evidence of this is found in the fact that Satan was originally created as God's most esteemed angel. He was originally without sin, but Bible says he became proud, which led him to become corrupt and violent. It's at this point that Satan rebelled against God. God then cast Satan down to earth, along with those angels that rebelled with him (Ezek. 28:11-19, Isa. 14:12-14). What's interesting to note is that the Bible describes Satan's fall from grace as being a "spectacle before kings" and that "nations were appalled at [Satan]" (Ezek. 28:17, 19), and Satan was known for his widespread trade (Ezek. 28:16, 18). The inference here is that there were other beings that existed prior to mankind in a civilization not unlike our own. These were not humans, but rather multitudes of angelic or immortal beings that existed prior to mankind that were capable of free will. Apparently after Satan's

rebellion, God created mankind as another opportunity for a race to reciprocate His love through obedience and worship.

2. **Adam & His Descendants:** Most people are familiar with the well-known story of Satan's temptation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. This represented mankind's first sin and act of rebellion against God. However less commonly known is what occurred next; namely, many scholars believe God's first creation (the fallen angels) continued to interact with mankind by intermarrying. This led to a race of people that were half-human and half-angelic. The Bible calls this race the "Nephilim." Because of this, and due to man's sinfulness, God decided to destroy the whole earth with a flood and start over. The Bible says: "The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So, the Lord said `I will wipe mankind, who I have created, from the face of the earth'... but Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6:6-8). This begins the well-known story of Noah and the Ark. Essentially, destroying mankind with a flood was God's way of again trying to create a group of people to reciprocate His love and be obedient to Him. Although God is perfect, he chose to give us free will, and his creation has the choice to accept or reject Him.
3. **Noah & His Descendants:** After Noah and his family emerged from the ark, one would hope the story of God's destruction of mankind with a flood and the saving of Noah and his family for being godly, would lead to a strong belief in God and a desire for his descendants to want to be obedient to God. Unfortunately, this is not the case, and mankind continued to sin. Even though Noah and his family saw personally God's protection for them and the consequences of his judgement on a sinful world, obedience to God

didn't last long. Nimrod, who was Noah's great grandson, in defiance of God, attempted to unite the world together (both politically and religiously) by building a tower "whose top would reach into the heavens." This tower was known as the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9). The purpose of this tower was to facilitate the worshiping of a false god, to express pride in human achievements, and to prevent human emigration beyond the boundaries of Mesopotamia. This was in defiance of God's plan and specific instructions. God foiled this plan by creating different languages, but ever since, mankind has been trying to unite the world in defiance of God's explicit command.

4. **The Nation of Israel:** After the tower of Babel, God started a fourth time to create a group of beings to return His love and be obedient to Him. Instead of destroying mankind with a flood, which he promised he would never do again (Gen. 9:11-16), God decided to choose a godly man (Abraham) and create a nation of chosen people from his descendants. These people would become His people, and He would become their God. The vast bulk of the Old Testament tells the story of God's selection of Abraham, Israel's covenant with God, and their eventual disobedience and rejection of God. After countless warnings that they were breaking the covenant they made with God, God let the Jewish people be taken into captivity and be dispersed among the nations twice: first through Babylon which lasted seventy year and second through the Roman Empire which lasted almost two thousand years.
5. **The Church:** Because God loved the people Israel, he sent his son to die for them and to atone for their sins. Unfortunately, the nation of Israel rejected Jesus as their messiah and had him put to death on a cross. Because of this rejection, Paul and other apostles then



focused on spreading the Good News to non-Jewish people (Acts 13:46, 18:6, 28:25-28). These people are known as Gentiles. If Gentiles would believe and accept Christ as their Lord, they would inherit the gift of salvation and being part of God's chosen that was initially offered to the Jews. This is the heart of the Gospel message contained in the New Testament and the beginning of the modern-day Church and Christianity. In essence, God was extending his plan to a new group of people to love and be in fellowship with Him – the Church. This is the age in which we now live. Unfortunately, the Bible is clear that the Church age doesn't end with the eventual conversion of the entire world to Christianity and world peace, but rather ends in a very dark time of persecution, sin and destruction known as the end times. The end times are a series of events (the Rapture, the Tribulation, the rise of the Antichrist, Armageddon, the Millennium, etc.) that lead up to the return of Jesus Christ who will come to judge the earth for its sin.

6. **The Millennium:** Following the events of the end times, Christ will establish His kingdom on earth. This period of time is known as the Millennium and will be marked by peace, prosperity and direct interaction with Christ himself. The Bible describes this time in great detail, but what's most relevant for this booklet is at the end of the Millennium, mankind will once again rebel against God with the help of Satan. Despite living under the leadership of Christ in a utopian-like society, God's creation will for the sixth and final time rebel against their creator.
7. **The Eternal State:** Following the final rebellion at the end of the Millennium, it is at this point that God will destroy the existing heavens and earth with fire and start all over again. Just as He did in the days of Noah and the ark, God will rescue His people (those

obedient to Him) prior to the destruction and then everything in the known universe will be destroyed. God himself will then create a new heaven and a new earth. This is known as the Eternal State and is described in detail in Revelation 21 and 22.

What's important to observe about the events above, is that time and time again throughout history we see a consistent theme of God creating or selecting a group of people to reciprocate His love, but yet time and time again we see that creation proceed to rebel against Him.

In essence, the Bible is the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32):

*There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.*

*Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.*

*When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' So he got up and went to his father.*

*But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.*

*The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.*

History is the story of God (the father in the story) creating or selecting a group of beings that He wants to have a close, special, personal relationship with (the prodigal son), but time and time again we see that group rejecting God and His plan for them and see the consequences of that disobedience play itself out.

This is analogous to parents who have a child they desire to have a close, loving relationship with, but then as the child gets older, the child rebels and disobeys the parents and wants nothing to do with them. The parents ask their child for obedience, not because they are controlling, but rather because they have a more mature perspective and want to protect their child from harm that sins such as drugs, violence or prostitution might bring. However, time and time again the child disobeys, rebels, breaks off communication and leaves the family. Is it hard to imagine in a situation such as this that after a long period of reaching out and asking for reconciliation with no results, these parents might decide to have another child who might be more loving?

God loves us as a parent, and He wants a close relationship with us. He would do anything for us – including literally sacrificing His own son

for us. He is reaching out, simply wanting a close relationship with us – His creation. Although many will respond and remain loyal to God similar to the older son in the story of the prodigal son, many will not, and will rebel against God.

This repeating story of God wanting a right relationship with His creation is at the very heart of the story of the Bible and God's plan for history. It's that simple.

## SATAN & DEMONS

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The first rebellion we see happen chronologically in the Bible was with Satan and the demons in eternity past. What's important about eternity past is that Adam and Eve were not the first beings to be created or to sin against God. The creation of the earth was not the beginning of God's eternal timeline. Before God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1), and before God created mankind (Genesis 2:4-25), there existed a group of beings in a society that had fellowship with God for an unknown period of time.

Evidence of this is found in the fact that Satan was originally created as God's most esteemed angel—described as being "a guardian cherub" ordained by God. He was originally without sin, but Bible says he became proud, which led him to become corrupt and violent. It's at this point that he rebelled against God. God then cast Satan down to earth, along with those angels that rebelled with him (Ezekiel 28:11-19, Isaiah 14:12-14).

What's interesting to note is that the Bible describes Satan's fall from grace as being a "spectacle before kings" and that "nations were appalled at [Satan]" (Ezekiel 28:17, 19), and Satan was known for his widespread trade (Ezekiel 28:16, 18). The inference here is that there were other beings that existed prior to mankind in a civilization not unlike our own. These were not humans, but rather multitudes of

angelic or immortal beings that existed prior to mankind that were capable of free will.

It is natural when studying the spirit world and the nature of heaven and hell to ask what other type of beings actually exist out there. Fortunately, the Bible gives us a good view of a variety of other beings that exist in God's creation. These include the following:

### **Angels**

Most people are familiar with angels. We place images of them in our nativity scenes and on top of our trees at Christmas. Pictures of them appear in famous pieces of art and in many Bibles. But what are angels really like and what does the Bible actually say about them? The existence of angels is taught in at least thirty-four books of the Bible and the word 'angel' itself appears about 275 times in scripture. From this we know the following:

- They are spirit beings who do not die (Hebrews 1:14; Luke 20:26). They are not humans. Some think that angels are simply believers who have passed away and gone on to heaven, but this is not the case. Angels are a separate 'species' that were created by God distinct from human beings (Psalm 8:4-5). They were created before the creation of the earth (Job 38:6-7) and will live for eternity.
- There are "innumerable" numbers of them (Hebrews 12:22 KJV, Revelation 5:11).
- They are powerful (2 Thessalonians 1:7). In fact, the Bible says that one angel destroyed 185,000 soldiers of the Assyrian army in

a night. Another rolled away the stone from the Tomb of Christ which likely weighed between one and a half to two tons and we are told that one angel will bind Satan and cast him into the Abyss (Revelation 20:1-3). Clearly, angels have great strength, but they are not all powerful as God is.

- They do not marry and do not have the ability to procreate amongst themselves (Matthew 22:30).
- They can clearly sin as evidenced by the previous point as well as the account of the original rebellion led by Satan against God.
- They have emotions much like our own including intellect (1 Peter 1:12), joy (Luke 2:13) and free will (Jude 6).
- They can view and observe the events of those on earth (1 Corinthians 4:9, 1 Timothy 5:21).
- Their primary purpose is to be “ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation” (Hebrews 1:13-14). Their principle function is actually to minister to us – humans on earth who are believers in Christ! This includes serving as advocates for us in heaven (Matthew 18:10) as well as protecting us. Examples of these roles include freeing Paul from prison (Acts 12:7), encouraging him when he had to stand trial (Acts 27:23-24) and caring for believers upon death (Luke 16:22, Jude 9).
- In addition to ministering to believers, angels also perform other tasks for God.
  - They made announcements concerning His coming (Luke 1:26-33, 2:9-15).

- They physically protected and strengthened Him while He was on earth (Matthew 2:13, 4:11, 26:53, 22:43).
- They assisted in His ministry (Matthew 28:2, 28:6).
- They will announce pending judgments (Genesis 19:13, Revelation 14:6-7).
- They inflict punishment (Acts 12:23).
- They will bring final judgment to the world during the Tribulation period (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8; Revelation 7:1-3, 8-19, 15-16), gather the body of believers from around the world after Christ's return (Matthew 24:31) and capture Satan following the Tribulation period (Revelation 20:1-4).

Two angels are named in the Bible. The first is Michael. Michael is given the title of 'archangel' in the Bible (Jude 9). He is described as "the great prince" (Daniel 12:1) and the commander of the angelic army of heaven (Revelation 12:7-9).

Angels are organized hierarchically, and Michael is their leader (or at least one of them). If God were to have a cabinet like the President of the United States, Michael would be equivalent of the defense secretary or chairman of the Joint Chiefs – he's in charge of the military.

The other angel named is Gabriel. Gabriel is God's messenger. He is not seen as important as Michael, but his position is certainly significant. He "stands in the presence of God" (Luke 1:19) and is sent out to deliver important messages on God's behalf. These messages



included the interpretation of dreams for Daniel as well as pregnancy announcements for Zechariah and Joseph.

Gabriel is mentioned four times (Daniel 8:16, 9:21-22; Luke 1:19, 26) in the Bible. To continue the cabinet analogy, Gabriel would be the equivalent of God's press secretary.

## **Seraphs**

In the strictest sense, Seraphs are not angels – they are a different ‘species’ or type of spirit beings. Perhaps they can be considered a different order of angelic beings, but they have a different form and function than Michael, Gabriel and the angels previously described.

The Bible only mentions them once (Ezekiel 6:2) and, in this instance, they are seen as agents of cleansing who facilitate the worship of God. They are described as having a human-like form (including faces, hands and feet) as well as six wings (Ezekiel 6:1-7).

## **Cherubs**

Cherubs are yet another ‘species’ or order, of spirit beings. They are described as being God's guardians. God placed cherubim with swords to guard the way to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24) and a representation of them was crafted on top of the ark of the covenant to symbolize the guarding of God's ‘seat’ or presence (Exodus 25:18-22).

If the archangel Michael can be considered in charge of the military, then perhaps the cherubim can be considered God's secret service agents.

Cherubim are described to be very quick – “like flashes of lightning” and have somewhat of a human form including legs and hands, as well as two pairs of wings. However, there are other differences.

Cherubim are described to have four faces on their heads (the front like a man, the right side like a lion, the left side like an ox and the back like an eagle) and their feet are described to be “like those of a calf” (Ezekiel 1:4-14). Clearly, cherubim are a combination of human, angelic and animal forms.

### **Satan**

Satan is very real. Although to many he may seem like a caricature or a representation of evil in general, the Bible is clear that he is indeed a real creature (Ezekiel 28:14). His existence is taught in seven Old Testament books and by every New Testament writer. Jesus himself stated that he had seen Satan (Luke 10:18) and taught of his existence (Matthew 13:39; Luke 11:18).

Like the other beings of the spirit world, Satan has human-like qualities. He has emotions (Revelation 12:17), intelligence (2 Corinthians 11:3) and free will (2 Timothy 2:26). He has certainly sinned (1 John 3:8). The Bible says he has lied (John 8:44), murdered (John 8:44) and rebelled against God (Isaiah 14:13-14).

Unlike Michael and Gabriel, Satan was a cherub. Ezekiel 28:12-17 says that he was originally ordained by God to be a guardian cherub –

responsible for protecting the throne of God. He was described as a “model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty”, “blameless” in his ways.

Below is what we know of Satan from the two primary passages in the Bible that describe him: Ezekiel 28:1-19 and a similar passage in Isaiah 14:12-17:

| <b>EZEKIEL 28:1–19</b>                       | <b>ISAIAH 14:12–17</b>    |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1. Was motivated by pride (v. 2)             | verse 13                  |
| 2. Claimed to be God (v. 2)                  | verse 14                  |
| 3. Claimed to sit on God’s throne (v. 3)     | verse 13                  |
| 4. Claimed divine wisdom (v. 2)              | verse 13                  |
| 5. Claimed superior human wisdom (v. 3)      | verse 16                  |
| 6. Proud of wealth and power (vv. 4–5)       | verse 16                  |
| 7. Condemned to violent judgment (vv. 6–10)  | verse 19                  |
| 8. Claimed to be model of perfection (v. 12) | verse 13                  |
| 9. Known for his beauty (v. 12)              | verse 12                  |
| 10. Was in Eden (v. 13)                      |                           |
| 11. Was a guardian cherub (v. 14)            |                           |
| 12. Was on holy mount of God (v. 14)         |                           |
| 13. Considered himself blameless (v. 15)     |                           |
| 14. Chose the way of evil (v. 15)            |                           |
| 15. Was expelled from his position (v. 16)   | verse 12                  |
| 16. Was corrupted by pride (v. 17)           | verse 13                  |
| 17. Was thrown down to earth (vv. 17–18)     |                           |
| 18. Desecrated many sanctuaries (v. 18)      |                           |
| 19. Suffered fiery judgment (v. 18)          | verse 15                  |
| 20. Nations appalled who knew him (v. 19)    | verses 16–17 <sup>1</sup> |

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<sup>1</sup> Cooper, L. E. (1994). *Ezekiel* (Vol. 17, pp. 269–270). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

### **Satan's Rebellion**

Unfortunately, the Bible tells us that Satan became prideful because of his physical beauty. This led him to believe he could be equal with God (Isaiah 14:13-14). The Bible says he became “filled with violence” and that he sinned by rebelling against God. As a result, God drove him in disgrace from His presence and expelled him to earth as a spectacle before the other spirit beings.

To use the cabinet analogy, Satan was in charge of the secret service (God's chief cherub) while Michael was in charge of the military.

In this role, Satan attempted a coup because he viewed himself as powerful as God. The coup attempt failed and Satan, as well as the other people who plotted against God, were expelled from the kingdom.

Today, Satan continues to wage battle against the armies of God with Michael continuing to be Satan's biggest adversary. The Bible states that Satan will continue to wage war in the spirit realm and on earth today, throughout the end times and even near the end of the Millennium (Christ's kingdom on earth). Satan will not give up but will eventually be banished to the lake of fire along with everyone else who has rejected God (Revelation 20:10).

### **Demons**

Demons are spirit beings (Matthew 17:18). They are described as angels (Revelation 12:7). As such, they are not simply humans or “bad people” who have passed away, but rather a separate species of beings that were created by God distinct from the human race (Psalm 8:4-5).

Satan is given the name “prince of demons” (Matthew 12:24) indicating that he is their leader in a hierarchical society similar to how the angels, cherubim and seraphs relate to God.

Interestingly, the Bible doesn’t specifically state that demons are actually the fallen angels who rebelled against God in Satan’s original coup attempt, but most scholars assume this is the case and it’s certainly the most logical explanation of who they are.

The demon world is well organized. They are described as being at war with God and mankind with the primary objectives of deceiving mankind, leading them astray and thwarting the will of God (Ephesians 6:10-12; 1 Timothy 4:1-3, Daniel 10:10-14).

Demons are intimately familiar with the nature of the spirit world and of God Himself. They know who Jesus is and, in fact, acknowledged him as “the Holy One of God” (Mark 1:24) and the “Son of God” (Matthew 8:24) when Christ confronted some on earth. They are also said to know His plan for salvation (James 2:19) and their eventual fate, which is to be cast with Satan in the lake of fire for eternity (Matthew 8:29; 25:41).

Of course, what’s important about the spirit world is that humans clearly were not the first created beings by God, and humans were clearly not the first to sin. God created angels in a society not all that unlike our own that existed for an unknown period of time, and many chose to rebel against God prior to His creation of mankind. This is the start of the recurring theme we will see throughout the Bible of God creating (or selecting) a group of people to have a personal relationship with and then that group rebelling against Him.



## ADAM & HIS DESCENDANTS

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Sometime after the fall of Satan and the demons – we have no idea how long – it could have been years, centuries, or millennia – God decides to create the universe as we know it and the Bible starts with a simple verse: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). With this simple verse, God not only creates the earth, but He creates time, energy, space and matter all at once.

God then proceeded to create Adam and Eve – the two first humans in a perfect setting—a setting free from sin where He could interact with them in a very personal and relational manner. In fact, God Himself walked among Adam and Eve in the garden, and we are told that Adam and Eve could hear the sound of His walking (Genesis 3:8). This clearly indicates that for Adam and Eve, God was not an abstract concept or silent deity. Rather, God had a somewhat human form (at the very least capable of walking) and interacted with His creation in a very real and tangible manner.

Of course, we all know the story of the fall (Genesis 3:1-24) —when Adam and Eve ate an apple from a tree that God had forbidden them to eat from. In doing so, they disobeyed God and committed the first sin. However, what’s interesting to note about this story is the consequence of this original sin. When God warned Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree he told them not to do so because they would “die”. Satan actually took advantage of this statement and used it to challenge Eve

when he was tempting her by saying “you will not surely die” (Genesis 3:4). The consequence of sin is physical death, we are told, but why?

The answer, believe it or not, is God’s grace. When Adam and Eve sinned against God, they forfeited their ability to have a direct, personal relationship with a present God. Because God is holy, He cannot be in the presence of sin, so when Adam and Eve sinned, God had to separate mankind from Himself. He physically banished Adam and Eve from the garden and never again allowed mankind to have direct interaction with Him (Genesis 3:22–24). Therefore, God had two alternatives—either allow mankind to live forever as sinners on earth eternally separated from Him without any means of restoration or introduce death as a means to reunite Himself with mankind. Given these choices, God chose the latter, which is why He originally told Adam that death would be the consequence if he ate from the forbidden fruit. Satan, in his challenge to Eve, was implying that immediate death would not be the consequence of eating the apple. This is true—what God meant was that eventual death would be the consequence of sin.

Death, then, is God’s way of reuniting ourselves to Him. This is why Christ said when He was on earth “do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both the soul and the body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). We are not to fear physical death, because death rescues us from an endless existence apart from God and brings us eventually into His presence, where we can once again have a direct and personal relationship with Him as He originally intended.

So, God created the heavens and the earth and mankind and pronounces them very good (Genesis 1:31), but then mankind sins. This sin



separates us from God and leads to our eventual death due to God's grace and desire to be reunited with us.

The above creation story from the Bible is very well known, but there are two important points about this story, that many people often miss. The first has to do with Satan and the second has to do with the trees that existed in the garden of Eden.

## **Satan**

First, if you really study and think about what happened in the garden, you quickly realize that God's first creation which rebelled against Him (Satan), interacted with God's second creation (mankind) and led mankind to sin and rebel against God as well. There is a direct link between God's first creation leading his second creation to sin and rebel. Although Adam and Eve had freewill and could have chosen not to sin, there is no doubt that Satan played a key role in their rebellion.

Of course, we don't know the reasons Satan had for deceiving Adam and Eve, but we can certainly speculate. As we saw in the previous chapter, Satan was created to have a special relationship with God. Satan was God's guardian cherub, but then he chose to sin because of his pride. God then created mankind. So why did Satan lead Adam and Eve into temptation? Why did he want mankind to sin? Perhaps because he couldn't stand the thought of God having a special relationship with someone else.

Imagine a firstborn son who is very close to his father. They share a special relationship, but then the son sins grievously (perhaps he committed a murder or something) and is cast out of the house by the

father. The father then has a second son who he becomes very close with. Wouldn't it seem likely that the first son would be jealous of the second son? I believe this is exactly why Satan wanted Adam and Eve to sin – to deny God from having a special relationship with his new creation – mankind. Satan's goal was simply to foil God's ultimate plan of having a right relationship with His creation.

### The Two Trees

The second thing I want to point out about the story of Adam and Eve is from Genesis 3:23-24:

*And the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.*

What's interesting about this passage is there were actually two forbidden trees in the garden – not just one: the tree of good & evil and the tree of life. Adam and Eve only partook of one of the two forbidden trees – the tree of good and evil – not from the other tree which is associated with eternal life.

After Adam and Eve are expelled from the garden, you'll note that the Cherubim are assigned to guard the way back. Why? Not as punishment per se, but to protect them from eating of the second tree!

Why would God want to keep Adam and Eve from eating of the second tree? The answer is the nature of the second tree, the tree of life, itself. Let's go from the very first chapter of the Bible to the very last: Revelation Chapter 22 where the New Heaven is described:

*On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. (Revelations 22:2b-3)*

*Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. (Revelations 22:14)*

It's interesting that we see the tree of life in the very beginning of the Bible and at the very end. We see it in the Garden of Eden where God's creation was described as perfect, and in the New Heaven which is also described as perfect.

What is the purpose of the tree of life? Quite simply, it brings eternal life with God. Revelation 2:7 says:

*To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.*

The tree of life is a symbol of eternal life with God in paradise. In both the Garden of Eden and in the New Heaven, mankind had (and will have) direct fellowship with God in a paradise-like place. It is where God's plan will ultimately be fulfilled of having a right relationship with His creation.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they could no longer have direct fellowship with God because God is holy and cannot be in the presence of sin. So, God banished them from the Garden. But keeping Adam

and Eve from the tree of life wasn't because God was angry – it was because He was being merciful. If Adam and Eve had eaten of the tree of life, they would have had eternal life, but since they had sinned against God, they would forever exist in a sinful state separated from God. By keeping Adam and Eve from the tree of life, God kept them from eternal separation from Himself – knowing that He would eventually provide a solution to the problem of sin in the form of Jesus Christ who would pay the penalty for their sins and open the door to a restored relationship with Himself in heaven.

God's plan is simply that He wants His creation to have a right relationship with Himself. He wants us to spend eternity with Him in Heaven. Satan and mankind's rebellion ruined that plan, but God, being merciful, protected mankind from an eternity of separation and ultimately provided a path to a restored relationship with Himself.

## NOAH & THE NEPHILIM

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The story of Noah and the Ark is well known. However, what is less commonly known is what really caused the flood. Here is the passage from Genesis 6:1-8:

*When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. Then the Lord said, “My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years.”*

*The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.*

*The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. So the Lord said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them.” But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.*

This is the well-known story of Noah and the Ark. God destroyed the world with a flood but saved Noah, because he was a righteous man.

But let's go back to verses 1-4 (the first two paragraphs above). These verses are perhaps some of the most debated in the Bible, which is probably why most pastors and Sunday school teachers skip them when discussing the flood. The key question that arises from this passage, of course, is who are these 'Nephilim' and what do they have to do with the story?

The term "sons of God" in this verse, translated in Hebrew, is *beneha'elohim*, which is consistently used in the Old Testament for angels. This passage says that because of the Nephilim (fallen angels), the earth became very evil. The Nephilim went to the "daughters of men" and had children with them. Because of this, the earth became evil. So evil, in fact, God decided to destroy the whole earth and start over. Essentially, destroying mankind with a flood was God's way cleansing mankind of the Nephilim, and starting over.

In the Bible there are only two other passages which reference the Nephilim. The first is Numbers 13:32-33, where ten of the twelve spies of Israel report that they have seen fearsome giants in Canaan:

*And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."*

The second reference is in Jude 6:

*And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.*

There has been a lot of confusion and debate about the Nephilim given the limited text in the Bible devoted to them. Many scholars believe the Nephilim were fallen angels (demons) based on the context, while others believe that the Nephilim were descendants of the godly line of Shem. Still others believe they were unknown giants living in the area, while others argue they were just judges or rulers.

So, how are we to identify the Nephilim and hence, interpret this passage correctly? When I teach a class on Apologetics, I talk about all that we know about Christ and ask the question how we really know Christ performed miracles, claimed to be God and did the other things the Gospels say He did? Other than the Bible, is there more? The answer is yes – we can look at corroborating evidence like the Babylonian Talmud (Jewish commentary), the writings of Josephus, Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, Lucian and others who confirm many of the basic details of the Gospel accounts. They provide corroborating accounts which give us confidence of what the Gospels say.

We can do the same here. We can look at sources of information outside of our Bible that were important at the time the Bible was being written. These are not spiritual canon or part of our inspired Bible, but there are several writings which are directly quoted in the Bible which can provide insight into the beliefs of the writer or what was considered known at the time.

In the case of the Bible, there are a dozen books the Bible directly quotes. These books include The Book of Jasher (2 Samuel 1:18 and Joshua 10:13), the Book of Wars of the Lord (Numbers 21:14), the Annals of Jehu (2 Chronicles 20:34), the Book of the Kings (2 Chronicles 24:27), the Book of the Chronicles of Ahasuerus (Esther 2:23, 6:1), the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings 11:41), the Sayings of Hozai (2 Chronicles 33:19), the Chronicles of King David (1 Chronicles 27:24), Samuel's book (1 Samuel 10:25), the Records of Nathan the Prophet (2 Chronicles 9:29), the Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite (2 Chronicles 9:29) and the Treatise of the Prophet Iddo (2 Chronicles 13:22).

The point is, there are several non-Biblical sources quoted by the Bible that can provide additional detail to help in our understanding. Let's look at a few as it relates to the Nephilim.

### **The Book of Jubilees**

The Book of Jubilees is an ancient Jewish religious work of 50 chapters. It was well known to Early Christians and quoted often. No complete Greek or Latin version is known to have survived, but accurate parts were found in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

*Because of these three things came the flood on the earth, namely, the fornication that the Watchers [fallen angels] committed against the law of their ordinances when they went whoring after the daughters of men, and took themselves wives of all they chose, and they made the beginning of uncleanness. And they begat sons, the Naphilim (Naphidim), and they were all dissimilar, and they devoured one another, and the Giants killed the Naphil, and the Naphil killed the Eljo, and the Eljo killed mankind, and one man killed*



*another. Everyone committed himself to crime and injustice and to shed much blood, and the earth was filled with sin. After this they sinned against the beasts and birds, and all that moved and walked on the earth, and much blood was shed on the earth, and men continually desired only what was useless and evil. And the Lord destroyed everything from the face of the earth. Because of the wickedness of their deeds, and because of the blood they had shed over all the earth, He destroyed everything. (Jubilees 7:21-25)*

This account corroborates:

- The flood came to the earth because of fornication between fallen angels and humans.
- The children of these unholy unions were called the Naphilim.
- The Naphilim committed unprecedented murder, crime, injustice, immorality and sin.
- The Lord then destroyed everything from the face of the earth because of the wickedness of their deeds.

### **The Book of Jasher**

The Book of Jasher is a book mentioned twice in the Bible. As it pertains to the flood:

*Their judges and rulers [which is a reference to fallen angels based on a previous passage] went to the daughters of men and took their wives by force from their husbands according to their choice, and the sons of men in those days took from*

*the cattle of the earth, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and taught the mixture of animals of one species with the other, in order therewith to provoke the Lord; and God saw the whole earth and it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its ways on earth, all men and all animals. the Lord said, I will blot out man that I created from the face of the earth, yea from man to the birds of the air together with cattle and beasts that are in the field for I repent that I made them. And all men who walked in the ways of the Lord died in those days, before the Lord brought the evil on man which he had declared, for this was from the Lord that they should not see the evil which the Lord spoke of concerning the sons of men. (Jasher 4:18-20)*

This account corroborates:

- Spirit beings fornicated with human women they took by force.
- These beings taught humans about the cross breeding of animals, which God condemned. This goes beyond breeding within species like we do with dogs, but across different species (think genetic manipulation) which was done by the fallen angels specifically to provoke God.
- The Lord then decided to end the world and mankind with the flood because of this sin.

### **The Book of Enoch**

The Book of Enoch is a composite of several manuscripts written by several authors over a period of 300 to 400 years. Of all the books quoted or referred to in the Bible, the Book of Enoch has influenced

the writers of the Bible as few others have. Not only did Jesus use phrases from this book, but there are over 100 comments in the New Testament which find precedence in the Book of Enoch. Recent discoveries of copies of the book among the Dead Sea Scrolls found at Qumran confirm the book was in existence before the time of Jesus Christ. This book is interesting because it contains the most detailed explanation of the Nephilim we have.

*Chapter 7: It happened after the sons of men had multiplied in those days, that daughters were born to them, elegant and beautiful. And when the angels, the sons of heaven, beheld them, they became enamored of them, saying to each other, Come, let us select for ourselves wives from the progeny of men, and let us beget children. ...Then they took wives, each choosing for himself; whom they began to approach, and with whom they cohabited; teaching them sorcery, incantations, and the dividing of roots and trees. And the women conceiving brought forth giants.*

*Chapter 8: Moreover Azazyel taught men to make swords, knives, shields, breastplates, the fabrication of mirrors, and the workmanship of bracelets and ornaments, the use of paint, the beautifying of the eyebrows, the use of stones of every valuable and select kind, and all sorts of dyes, so that the world became altered. Impiety increased; fornication multiplied; and they transgressed and corrupted all their ways...And men, being destroyed, cried out; and their voice reached to heaven.*

*Chapter 10: Then the Most High, the Great and Holy One spoke, and sent Arsayalalyur to the son of Lamech (Noah). Say to him in my name, Conceal yourself. Then explain to him the consummation which is about to take place; for all the*

*earth shall perish; the waters of a deluge shall come over the whole earth, and all things which are in it shall be destroyed. And now teach him how he may escape, and how his seed may remain in all the earth...Restore the earth, which the angels have corrupted; and announce life to it, that I may revive it...Purify the earth from all oppression, from all injustice, from all crime, from all impiety, and from all the pollution which is committed upon it. Exterminate them from the earth...Then shall all the children of men be righteous...The earth shall be cleansed from all corruption, from every crime, from all punishment, and from all suffering; neither will I again send a deluge upon it from generation to generation forever.*

So, what do we learn from all this? This account (and the sections I shortened due to space) corroborate several key facts:

- Demons lusted after women, married them and had children with them.
- The children were giants.
- The fallen angels taught humans sorcery, incantations astrology and astronomy.
- This led to a terrible time of sin, fornication, unrighteousness and bloodshed.
- God's motivation in sending the flood was to cleanse the earth from all of this corruption.
- At this time, these fallen angels were then captured and confined [in the Abyss].

- God's hope following the purification of the earth is that "all the children of men be righteous, and all nations" (10:26) would worship Him.
- God then would bless mankind and lead to a time of peace across the world.

So, what can we conclude from the corroborating evidence? What can we learn from these sources of information that existed outside of our Bible, but were important at the time the Bible was being written?

It's clear from these sources that the oldest-known interpretation of the Nephilim is probably the correct one – that the Nephilim were fallen angels who had children with the "daughters of humans" and corrupted mankind and led them to sin grievously. This view was held by a number of the early church fathers and is the most widely held among modern scholars today.<sup>2</sup>

The point is, if you really think about what happened with the flood, it's very similar to what really happened in the garden of Eden with Adam & Eve: God's first creation which rebelled against Him (Satan and his demons), interacted with His second creation (mankind) and led mankind to sin and rebel against God. There is a direct link between God's first creation leading his second creation to sin and rebel yet again against God.

God's plan in destroying the earth wasn't to punish mankind *per se*, but rather because He wanted His creation to have a right relationship

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<sup>2</sup> Steinmann, A. E. (2019). *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (D. G. Firth, Ed.; Vol. 1, p. 82). Inter-Varsity Press.

with Himself. He wanted mankind to have eternal fellowship with him. The fallen angels and mankind's rebellion ruined that plan, but God, being merciful, decided to "restart" the earth through Noah as a path to provide a restored relationship with Himself free from the influence of the fallen angels.

God's primary reason for sending the flood was to cleanse the earth of its wickedness, for Noah and his family to repopulate the earth, and to again establish a right relationship with His creation. Unfortunately, as we'll see in the next chapter, this plan didn't last long.

## NIMROD & THE TOWER OF BABEL

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Following the flood, God instructed humans to “be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth” (Genesis 9:1). In other words, have lots of babies and spread out. That’s it! How hard could that be? God’s plan was to repopulate the earth and once again have a right relationship with His creation – free from the influence of the Nephilim discussed in the prior chapter and the corruption they caused.

Unfortunately, mankind once again continued to sin and rebel after the flood. This rebellion didn’t take long and begins with Noah’s great grandson, Nimrod, who in defiance of God, attempted to unite the world together both politically and religiously by building a tower known as the tower of Babel. Two passages explain this event:

*Cush was the father of Nimrod, who became a mighty warrior on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; that is why it is said, “Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord.” The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Uruk, Akkad and Kalneh, in Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah and Resen, which is between Nineveh and Calah—which is the great city. (Genesis 10:8-12)*

*Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, “Come,*

*let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth." (Genesis 11:1-4)*

The purpose of the Tower of Babel was to facilitate the worship of a false god, for humans to express pride in their own achievements, and to prevent human emigration beyond the boundaries of Mesopotamia. In essence, what God intended for good, mankind saw as a threat. By building the tower of Babel, mankind was rebelling against God's plan in favor of their own.

There are four key questions we need to answer about this episode in history: 1) who was Nimrod, 2) what was the purpose of the Tower of Babel, 3) how did God intervene, and 4) Why was this rebellion so significant in the history?

### **Who was Nimrod?**

The first thing we need to know about Nimrod is his name. The name "Nimrod" in Hebrew literally means 'to rebel'. That's our first clue about who Nimrod was.

The second thing we need to know is that Nimrod was a warrior (Genesis 10:8-9). Nimrod's aggression as a person ran totally counter to what God had intended when he instructed Noah's descendants to "be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth." God didn't want a warrior to conquer mankind – rather, he wanted mankind to spread out.



The third thing we need to know about Nimrod is that the kingdoms he created include Babylon, Assyria and Nineveh, which should be familiar to those that study the Bible as places that have historically stood against God's people. Both Babylon and Assyria conquered Israel at different points, and Nineveh was so evil God instructed Jonah to go there to preach repentance. When Jonah refused believing Nineveh was unworthy of God's grace and fled in the other direction, God led him to be swallowed by a whale to get the message. The point is the kingdoms Nimrod created were known for their defiance of God.

The final thing we need to know about Nimrod is the first kingdom listed is Babylon. Babel is the Hebrew name for Babylon. From this we know that Nimrod likely led the efforts at the Tower of Babel even though the Bible doesn't explicitly state this. This is the consensus belief held in both Hebrew and Christian tradition. In addition, Flavius Josephus, one of the most respected Roman historians, stated it was under Nimrod's direction that the building of Babel and its tower began; and this view is also found in the Talmud (the Jewish commentary on the Torah), so there is good corroborating evidence to this fact.

So, Nimrod was a conquering warrior, formed multiple kingdoms and was the leader behind the Tower of Babel which was in Babylon.

### **What was the Purpose of the Tower?**

Genesis 11:4 says: "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the earth." There are four problems identified in this one verse:

1. "Let us build ourselves a city" - God didn't command Noah's descendants to build cities – he wanted them to scatter around the world and re-populate it.
2. "A tower that reaches the heavens" – Nimrod wanted to be like God. The tower was to be a symbol of human autonomy, and the city builders saw themselves determining and establishing their own destiny independent of God.
3. "So that we may make a name for ourselves" – the building of the tower was all about pride. The builders wanted the tower to be a rallying point for their fame and a symbol of their greatness.
4. "So that we may not be scattered over the face of the earth" – the whole purpose was to defy God's command to Noah and his descendants.

In short, building the tower was the antithesis of what God intended after the flood. Flavius Josephus wrote:

*Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God. He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah, a bold man, and of great strength of hand. He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as if it were through his means they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny, seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence on his power. He also said he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too*

*high for the waters to reach. And that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers.*

## **How did God Intervene?**

Genesis 11:5-8 continues the story and goes on to say:

*But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. The Lord said, 'If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.' So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city.*

From this, we can conclude two things. First, I believe God recognized that absolute power corrupts and didn't intend for there to be one world government or one totalitarian ruler over the world. I think God worried about the dangers of a one-world ruler, which Nimrod was becoming and the risk that Nimrod was creating in turning people against the one true God. Second, God's purpose of confusing the languages was to confuse and stop the building effort and to scatter mankind around the world.

Of course, God accomplished his goal. Verse 8 says they stopped the building effort and they then scattered around the world.

## **Why was this Rebellion so Significant in History?**

I think many people are familiar with the Tower of Babel, but don't truly understand its significance in history. Throughout the Bible,

Babylon symbolized the epitome of a powerful, evil, worldly city. The city was known for its luxury and moral decadence, and under Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon invaded Israel, destroyed the Jewish Temple and the city of Jerusalem, and took the Jewish people into captivity for seventy years. That alone could make the name Babylon synonymous with evil in the Bible.

However, the Tower of Babel and Babylon goes much deeper in historical significance. In the book of Revelation, the false religion of the End Times is given the name "Babylon the Great, the Mother of Prostitutes." It is called this because Babylon, synonymous with "Babel," was the site of the first great apostasy or false religion. In fact, Herodotus, a Greek historian who lived around 450 BC, claimed that Babylon was the source of all the religions of the world. This is why the Bible calls it the "Mother of Prostitutes."

This interpretation requires some explanation. Note however, the following explanation is aggregated from various ancient sources, which may or may not be 100% accurate, but there is enough evidence in ancient writings that we can be confident that at least the essence of the description that follows is true.

Nimrod's wife, Semiramis, was a priestess. After Nimrod's death, she proclaimed Nimrod a god—the sun god who eventually became known as Baal in the Canaanite culture. She had a son, Tammuz, whom she claimed was miraculously conceived after Nimrod's death by a sunbeam which carried Nimrod's sperm to her. Tammuz was said to be Nimrod's reincarnation. Together, they promoted idol worship. Semiramis became known as the Supreme One, or Queen of Heaven, and was worshiped as a god. Tammuz supposedly became god of the underworld after being killed by a wild boar while he was out hunting.

The worship of Semiramis and Tammuz soon swept throughout the ancient world and became integrated into other cultures. After the Tower of Babel was destroyed and the multiplicity of languages developed, Semiramis was worshiped as a goddess under many different names. In Egypt, Semiramis and Tammuz became known as Isis and Osiris. In Assyria, Ishtar and Baccus; in India, Isi and Iswari; in Asia Cybele and Deoius; in Greece Aphrodite and Eros and in Rome, Venus and Jupiter (a.k.a. Cupid). Although the names and cultures have changed, the basic worship of the mother and son remains the same. Even in contemporary culture, the image of Cupid holding a bow and arrow is related to this false religious system—Cupid represents Tammuz (the reincarnated Nimrod), whom the Bible describes as being a "mighty hunter" for the souls of men.

As can be seen, Herodotus's claim that Babylon was the source of all the false religions of the world is, in many ways, true. In fact, the practice of mother/child worship based on Semiramis and Tammuz became so widespread that it crept into the Christian church.

In the city of Ephesus, the mother-goddess was known as Diana and it was in this city in AD 431 that the church council of Ephesus approved the worship of Mary, the mother of Jesus. In fact, the word "Madonna" comes from the Latin phrase, "Mea Domina" ("My Lady"), which was also the title for Baal's wife in the Phoenician culture. Our word "Easter" is a derivative of the Babylonian goddess "Ishtar," the "goddess of sun and spring"—yet another reference to Semiramis. In fact, it's because of this origin that Easter falls on a different day each year – it's scheduled to occur on the first Sunday after the first full moon occurring on or after the vernal equinox, commonly known as the first day of spring. This schedule reflects the pagan celebrations of Ishtar rather than the actual timing of Christ's resurrection from the

dead. In the Babylonian culture, the egg was a symbol of fertility, which is where the Easter egg derives. Further, the occasion of lent (which occurs just prior to Easter) originates from the forty days that Semiramis wept after the death of Tammuz during which the Babylonians pleaded with Ishtar for his resurrection. This practice is mentioned in Ezekiel 8:14.<sup>1</sup> Other passages in the Bible referencing Semiramis, the Queen of Heaven, include Jeremiah 7:18 and 44:15-30.

As a result, Babylon was not only the first city to rebel against God and the origin of a movement to a one-world government, but it was also the origin of almost every false religion, occult belief, and form of idolatry on the planet.

This is why the rebellion that occurred at the Tower of Babel and around Babylon is so significant in history and why Babylon is mentioned continually throughout the Bible as both a literal place and a figure of speech to refer to rebellion and evil.

In summary, three short generations after Noah's ark and God's plan to reestablish a group of people who would have a right relationship with him, and mankind again rebels against God yet again at the Tower of Babel. This continues the recurring theme we see throughout the Bible.

# THE JEWISH PEOPLE

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Following Nimrod's rebellion at the Tower of Babel, God continued the recurring theme we see throughout history. Time and time again we see God creating (or selecting) a group of beings with free will for the purpose of returning His love and having a right relationship with Him, only to then see His creation choosing to rebel against Him.

This is where Abraham and the people of Israel come in. Abraham lived about four thousand years ago and more space is given to recounting his personal life in the Bible than almost any other personality, which speaks to his importance throughout scripture. He is introduced in Genesis 12 – the very next chapter after the story of the Tower of Babel, which speaks to this theme. Humans rebelled against God at the Tower of Babel and literally the next thing God does is continue the theme by selecting a Godly man to have a right relationship with Him and become His treasured people.

## **The Abrahamic Covenant**

Why was Abraham so important? Because of the covenant God made with Abraham. This covenant led to Abraham becoming the physical father of the Arab and the Jewish nations, and is central to understanding three of the world's largest religions today: Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

The starting point of Israel's religion was the day when God spoke to Abraham. God told Abraham that if he left the land where he was living (Ur, which is in modern-day Southern Iraq) and moved to a new country, He would make Abraham the founder of a great nation and he would inherit the land that God would show him. This land is what became known as the Promised Land (Genesis 12). But Abraham and his wife Sarah were beyond childbearing age, so it was not clear how God would fulfill this promise. God fulfilled it by miraculously delivering a son to Abraham and Sarah, whom they named Isaac.

God then tested Abraham by asking Abraham to sacrifice his son on an altar, just as he would ordinarily sacrifice an animal as an offering to God. Abraham obeyed God and willingly offered up his son on an altar that he built on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22). Despite the many years of waiting for a son and the love he undoubtedly had for him, Abraham believed that God would keep His promise of making a great nation of his descendants and reasoned that God would raise his son from the dead (Hebrews 11:19). God spared Isaac from death at the last minute, and Abraham was proven to be a man of faith in God's eyes because of his obedience and willingness to offer up his only son to God. As a result, Abraham served as an example of what God Himself would do two thousand years later; namely, offer His only son, Jesus Christ, to die on a cross as a sacrifice for the sin of the world. God's blessing today is for those who have faith in God and believe that Jesus Himself was resurrected from the dead.

The word 'covenant' is defined by Webster's Dictionary as a "formal, solemn, and binding contract...a seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action." The covenant God made with Abraham was indeed a contract – it was a physical deal between God and Abraham which specified if Abraham performed



some action (leaving his country and moving to a new land), God would perform some action (blessing Abraham greatly, maintaining a special relationship with his descendants and giving Abraham's descendants the Promised Land).

Abraham accepted this deal. Proof of Abraham's acceptance is found in the fact that he did indeed leave his country and follow God to a new land. This was the only requirement placed on Abraham as part of this deal. Therefore, God was then obligated to live up to His end of the bargain.

### **The Mosaic Covenant**

But that's not the end of the story. Now we need to fast forward to the people of Israel in the days of Moses. The story of Moses is well-known: after Moses led the people of Israel out of captivity in Egypt, they wandered around the wilderness for forty years. During this time, God reaffirmed the covenant He made with Abraham and greatly expanded on it. This new covenant (or treaty) became known as the "Mosaic Covenant" because it was given to the people of Israel through Moses.

*Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation...the people all responded together 'We will do everything the Lord has said.' (Exodus 19:4-8)*

The books of Exodus and Deuteronomy in the Bible are reports of this covenant God made with the people of Israel. In fact, these books are

structured in the same way and contain a number of the same elements found in other treaties made in the period 2000-1000 BC. The actual arrangement of the book sections (title, historical introduction, requirements, instructions about keeping the treaty document and making its contents known, witnesses, curses and blessings) closely parallels the treaties regularly made during the time. Therefore, what took place at Sinai was a solemn event and considered by the people of Israel to be a legal or binding contract.

In this new and expanded covenant, God promised if the people of Israel obeyed His commandments (among other things), He would treat them as His treasured possessions. He would make them a kingdom of priests, with direct access to God, and a holy nation set apart from all others. The people of Israel affirmed this covenant and agreed to “do everything the Lord had said” (Exodus 19:3-8).

Unfortunately, the Israelites promptly broke the covenant they had made with God by making and worshiping idols (Exodus 32:1-10).

The Israelite's breach of the covenant infuriated God and God told Moses He planned to destroy the entire nation of Israel (“Leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them” - Exodus 32:9). In response, Moses reminded God of the original covenant he had made with Abraham – he essentially told God that while the Israelites broke the covenant, God needed to stick to his end of the deal he made with Abraham (“Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self...” – Exodus 32:13). In hearing this, God relented and did not bring the disaster he had threatened.

The people of Israel then repented of their sins of idolatry, and God renewed the covenant He had made with them. God promised to bless them above every nation of the earth, and do wonders for them never before done for any nation in the world if they remained obedient to Him (Exodus 34:10, Deuteronomy 28:1).

However, as part of this renewed covenant, God also promised if they disobeyed Him again and broke this new covenant he was making with them, they would be disciplined and cursed. God said “If you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you.” (Deuteronomy 28:15). God then spelled out in great detail the curses he would pour out upon the nation of Israel, including the nation twice being taken captivity by a foreign power, the dispersion of the Jews among all the nations and a long and terrible time of mistreatment by the people of the world (Deuteronomy 28).

Unfortunately, this turned out to be the case – the people of Israel did not remain faithful to the covenant and God declared they had broken the covenant they had made with Him (Proverbs 2:17, Jeremiah 31:32, Hosea 6:7, Hebrews 8:9). The story of Israel’s disobedience, and the consequences, fills the majority of the Old Testament.

Per God’s promise, the first time the Israelites disobeyed God, they would be conquered by an as-of-yet unknown nation whose language they did not understand which would lay siege to Jerusalem (Deut. 28:36, 49, 52). This prophecy was fulfilled. The first conquering of Jerusalem was by Babylon in 586 BC, which laid siege to, and then destroyed Jerusalem. Babylon did not exist in 1410 BC when Moses recorded this prophecy, and the Babylonian language was Aramaic, not Hebrew as spoken in Jerusalem.

The second time the Israelites disobeyed God, God said that the survivors would be scattered throughout the world in every nation. They would worship idols, be relentlessly persecuted and be without a country. They would be transported in ships back to Egypt and offered as slaves (Deuteronomy 4:27-31, 28:64-68). Just as with the first, this prophecy was fulfilled.

Following exile in Babylon, the city of Jerusalem was rebuilt during the Media-Persian Empire but was destroyed again by Rome in AD 70 after a Jewish rebellion. When the Roman Empire invaded Jerusalem, those who survived were shipped off to slave markets in Egypt. Jews were then banished from the city of Jerusalem. In what became known as the "Diaspora," Jews fled to all parts of the known world and for the next two thousand years, the Jewish people wandered the earth with no country of their own in constant fear of persecution and death.

All of this was due to Israel's disobedience and the breaking of the covenant they made with God literally thousands of years ago. God wanted Israel to be a nation set apart from others – a nation that would have a close and special relationship with their creator. Unfortunately, Israel broke the covenant and paid the price that was called for in the contract they made with God.

However, God's plan with Israel isn't finished. As we'll see in the next chapters, God will eventually restore Israel to a right relationship with Himself.

# THE CHURCH AGE

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The story of Israel's covenant with God, their disobedience and the consequence of that disobedience fills the vast majority of the Old Testament. Fortunately, this isn't the end of the story.

Jesus Christ came to the earth to redeem Israel and mankind from their sins and the consequences of breaking His covenant, but to truly understand what this meant, and what God coming in the form of a man truly achieved, we need to revisit Abraham's covenant to understand the implications and consequences.

## The Old Covenant

When God made His covenant with Abraham, he followed what seems today to be a fairly bizarre ceremony to confirm the covenant. This ceremony is recorded in Genesis 15. In this ceremony, God asked Abraham to cut several animals in two and lay them opposite one another. God then passed between the two halves to seal the covenant.

*So the Lord said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon." Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however,*

*he did not cut in half. Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.*

*As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. Then the Lord said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure." When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram. (Genesis 15:9-17a)*

Although this ceremony may seem odd to us today, the practice was actually quite common at the time. The practice is described in other Biblical texts such as Exodus 24 and in various non-Biblical works discovered through archeology such as the Mari texts and the Alalah tablets.

This ceremony carried special meaning. In the time of Abraham, the ceremony God followed usually occurred when two tribes made a treaty. When everything was ready, usually at sundown, the two parties to the agreement – typically tribal leaders – walked barefoot through the blood of the separated animals; thereby signifying what would happen to either of them if they failed to keep their end of the bargain. In other words, if one of them broke the promise, they forfeited their life.

What was different about this particular ceremony with Abraham is that God alone passed through the pieces of animals. Abraham did not. By doing so, God alone swore fidelity to the terms of the agreement and placed the obligation for its fulfillment on Himself alone. God then, became solely liable if any of the conditions of the agreement were violated by either party.

In legal vocabulary, this concept is known as indemnification and occurs quite frequently in modern legal agreements. It is generally used when one party to an agreement provides promises to another and agrees to indemnify the second in case of a lawsuit – meaning the first party will be solely liable if the second party is sued.

With this as background, we can now start to see the pieces of the puzzle are coming together. Namely:

- God entered into a contact with Abraham that said if Abraham or any of his descendants violated the contract, God alone would be obligated to pay the price with His own blood.
- Although Abraham kept his obligations of the contact – all he had to do was to move to a foreign land to fulfill the original terms of the deal he made with God – his descendants did not.
- When the people of Israel agreed to the Mosaic covenant at Mt. Sinai, they were agreeing to a significantly expanded contract with God. While this covenant promised incredible blessings if they fulfilled their end of the deal (namely, obeying God's commands), it also contained significant penalties for breach of this contract.
- The Mosaic covenant contained penalties against Israel for breaking the covenant, but this did not remedy the original contract

God made with Abraham which required God and God alone to pay the ultimate penalty for the breach of the contract with his life.

- Because the people of Israel broke the covenant God had made with them, God was then obligated to pay the price of the penalty – namely with His earthly death (since this was an earthly contract).

We can now see why God had to come to earth in the physical form of a human and die. God had to fulfill the terms of the covenant He made which included paying the full penalty for the sins committed by the Jewish people. There was simply no other option. When God established the covenant with Abraham, God alone became solely liable if the contract was breached. The penalty for breach by either party was death. This is why God, in the human form of Christ, had to come to the earth and die, and why he couldn't have accomplished what He did any other way.

Naturally, there were other reasons for Christ's coming, but Christ's death ultimately fulfilled and completed the terms of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants, by paying the penalty for His people who broke the covenant He had established with them. Christ's death completely fulfilled the terms of the old covenant, making it no longer binding. Proof of this is found throughout the New Testament.

*For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance – now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from their sins committed under the first covenant.  
(Hebrews 9:15)*



*God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code [the Mosaic law], with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. (Colossians 2:14)*

*Christ is the end of the [Mosaic] law. (Romans 10:4)*

The death of Christ on the cross wasn't just a singular incident, but rather the key event that tied together the Old Testament and the Jewish faith, to the New Testament and new covenant that Christ established with His believers in the Church.

### **The New Covenant**

We now live under the new Covenant or the New Testament. The name "New Testament" literally means "the New Covenant." But this begs the question...what is this covenant? If a covenant is a contract and we now have a new contract with God that we live under, shouldn't we all know what that covenant is and be very familiar with it?

The following verses speak to this new covenant:

*In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:20)*

*"This is my blood of the new covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (Matthew 26:28)*

In these verses, Christ is performing a ritual very similar to what God did with Abraham when he confirmed the old covenant. Christ is making a covenant with his followers – a promise, but here Christ is

saying his own blood, not the blood some animals cut in half, is how this new covenant is being confirmed. Christ's blood will confirm the new covenant. But Christ is actually going further than that. He is saying His own blood is the new covenant. The new covenant is the promise that God makes with humanity that He will forgive sin and restore fellowship with those whose hearts are turned toward Him.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. (John 3:16-18)

The covenant as described by John is simply this: God sent His son as a sacrifice for our sins. Whoever (Jews or Gentiles) that believe in Him shall have a right relationship with God.

The writer of Hebrews goes on to describe this further:

*For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said: 'The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another,*

*‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear. (Hebrews 8:7-13)*

The study of this passage could fill a whole separate book, but I want to note a couple of things:

- This passage starts by quoting from Jeremiah 31. The point is Jeremiah prophesized about the New Covenant 600 years before Christ! The Old Covenant, Israel’s disobedience and Christ’s sacrifice was all part of God’s plan.
- This passage it clear that the New Covenant applies to Israel, but after the resurrection of Christ, Gentiles were brought into the blessing of the New Covenant as well (Acts 10; Ephesians 2:13–14). The reason this is important is that some have argued The Church inherited the promises that God made to Israel when Israel rejected him. This is not the case. Rather, God just opened the invitation of salvation to everyone, but the promises God made to Israel are still in effect.
- This passage shows that with the New Covenant comes the promise of a personal relationship with God. God isn’t an abstract being in the sky. Rather, he will have a personal relationship with us just as He did with Adam and Eve in the beginning. He wants and deeply desires a close, personal relationship with His creation.
- The last part of this passage (where Israel turns back to God and has a restored relationship with Him) hasn’t happened yet. The

final fulfillment of the New Covenant for the people of Israel will be fulfilled during the Millennial Kingdom which is described in the next chapter.

### **The Church Age**

This leads us to the Church Age. Mankind now has a New Covenant which is open to anyone who would put their trust in Christ. There is nothing required other than simply accepting the gift of Christ's sacrifice.

One would think starting from the time of Christ on, as the word of what Christ did on the cross spread around the world, that more and more people would hear the good news until the whole world eventually becomes followers of Christ. As this happens, the world would become more peaceful, Christlike, and united.

This seems far-fetched given world history, but this is actually what many people thought as recently as a few centuries ago. The postmillennial view of the end times taught that the current Church age is the Millennium (or Christ's Kingdom on earth, which is not necessarily a thousand years in length) and that the Second Coming of Christ will occur after the current age.

People who held this view believed that Christ's Kingdom on earth will gradually be extended through the preaching of the Gospel until eventually the whole world is Christianized. After Christianity has dominated the world for a long time, Christ would then return after (post-) the Millennium and usher in the resurrection, the last judgment, and the Eternal Kingdom (described later in this book).

This view is based on a largely spiritualized interpretation of prophecy. Its major tenet is that the earth is getting better rather than worse, and that the kingdom age will be achieved by man through the spreading of the Gospel message.

Postmillennialism was made popular by the writings of Unitarian Daniel Whitby (1638-1726) and was the dominant view in America during much of the nineteenth century. This view relies on achieving a man-made utopian state on earth. Unfortunately, World War I greatly decreased the number of people who held this view, and World War II virtually wiped this belief out because it became harder to argue that the earth was getting better and not worse.

If there is one lesson to be learned from the recurring theme we see in this book, it is that people always seem to turn away from God and rebel against Him. Unfortunately, the Church Age will be no different. The Bible paints a picture of what the world and the Church will look like during the end times and prior to Christ's return and it's not encouraging:

*The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. (1 Timothy 4:1)*

*But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. (2 Timothy 3:1-5)*

*For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)*

The picture painted by the Bible of the end of the Church Age is not a wonderful time where the world is Christianized, but rather a terrible time of sin and moral decay even within the Church.

Is it really hard to believe that people will not put up with sound doctrine? Today, many Christians have done exactly this and have abandoned sound doctrine and fallen away from the true teachings of the Church.

A recent survey by George Barna<sup>3</sup> found that 176 million Americans claim to be Christians—69% of the population. Yet, only 6% of U.S. adults—which is 9% of those identifying as Christians—possess a biblical worldview, believing the Bible to be accurate and reliable, among other convictions.

Barna said in an interview at the time: “Two out of three Americans think of themselves as a Christian, and a majority still think that Christianity is kind of about the Bible, but there’s a big gap between what (self-identified Christians) believe the Bible may teach, and what the Bible actually teaches.”

For instance, 61% of those who self-identify as Christians affirm that: “I believe that God is the all-knowing, all-powerful, perfect and just Creator of the universe who still rules the universe today.” However,

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<sup>3</sup> “American Worldview Inventory 2021”, Cultural Research Center, Arizona Christian University. Dr. George Barna, Director of Research.

large majorities of self-identified Christians also report many beliefs “not in harmony with biblical teaching,” according to the survey. These include:

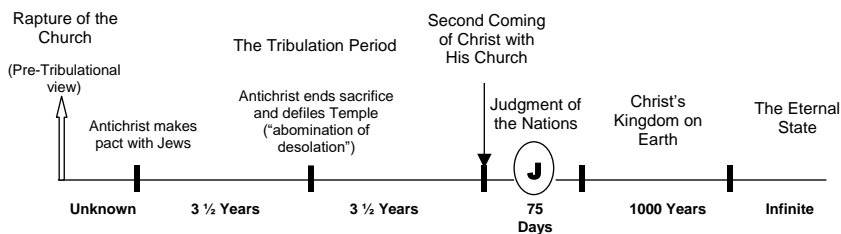
- 72% argue that people are basically good
- 66% say that ‘having faith’ matters more than which faith you pursue
- 64% say that all religious faiths are of equal value
- 58% believe that if a person is good enough, or does enough good things, they can earn their way into Heaven
- 57% believe in karma

These beliefs are at odds with a Christian worldview.

Of course, one need only look at the multitude of Christian denominations that have split or have gone through extensive turmoil over social issues such as gay marriage, abortion and social justice to see that Christians are far from united on a whole range of doctrinal issues.

The point is simply this: the Bible paints a depressing picture of what the end of the current age will look like. Unfortunately, the Church Age doesn’t end with the majority of people having a right relationship with God through their acceptance of Jesus Christ. Rather, the Church Age will end with the vast majority of those who have heard the gospel message rejecting God and turning to their own evil desires. This will lead to a pouring out of God’s judgment on the earth during what is known as the ‘end times’ or ‘the last days’.

But what are the end times? Movies frequently portray the end of the earth occurring after a collision with a meteor or as the result of a nuclear war. Global warming, pollution, or overpopulation are frequently mentioned as trends that might lead to the end of mankind. The Bible however, paints a different picture. Throughout dozens of books of the Bible, both in the New Testament and the Old, the events of the end times are described in great detail. Believers don't have to wonder what might happen to the earth—the Bible describes these events and provides a precise timeline for when certain events will occur:



The end times that the Bible describes centers around the following key events:

**The Rapture:** The Rapture is an event described in the Bible where all Christians will be removed from the earth. The Christians living at the time of this event will not die. Rather, they will be taken directly to heaven to be with Christ. There are various different views on when this event will actually occur. For simplicity's sake, the Pre-Tribulation view of the Rapture is the one shown on the timeline above since it is the most widely held.

**The Tribulation:** The Tribulation is a seven-year period during which most of the events of the end times will take place. This period will start with the Antichrist signing a seven-year peace treaty with the



nation of Israel. It is during this seven-year Tribulation period that God will pour out numerous judgments upon mankind. These judgments are known as the Seal, Trumpet, and Bowl judgments and will be reminiscent of the plagues that God poured out on the people of Egypt in the days of Moses. It is during this time of Tribulation that the Antichrist will rise to power and establish a one-world government and a one-world religion. The Tribulation will ultimately end with the nations of the world gathering together against Israel for a war known as Armageddon.

**The Second Coming:** Just before the nations of the world destroy themselves at the battle of Armageddon, Jesus Christ will return to the earth. He will destroy the armies gathered against Israel and capture the Antichrist and Satan. He will then cast them, along with all of the unbelievers at the time, into Hell. Christ will then judge mankind during what is known as the Judgment of the Nations.

**The Millennium:** The Millennium is the ultimate fulfillment of the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David. It refers to a thousand-year period after the Judgment of the Nations during which Christ will physically rule the earth from the capital city of Jerusalem. This will be a time of great peace and prosperity unlike the world has ever known and is described in the next chapter.

As we have seen, the Church Age represents yet one more cycle in the recurring theme of God creating or establishing a group of people (in this case the Church), who He desires to have a close personal relationship with but will ultimately fall away and reject God in large numbers. This current age will then climax in the terrible events of the

end times and the ultimate return of Christ who will come to judge the earth.

Then, upon Christ's return, the Church Age will end and the cycle will be repeated one final time during the Millennium.

# THE MILLENNIUM

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The Millennium refers to a thousand-year period during which Christ will physically rule over the earth. After the terrible events of the end times, Christ will personally return to the earth, establish His Kingdom on earth, elevate Israel to a position of prominence on the world stage, and bring final peace and prosperity to the world. This period of time is so significant, that there are more prophecies in the Bible about this Kingdom and its importance than any other theme of prophecy.

Although there have been many kingdoms throughout history, the Kingdom of Christ will be different: it will not be ruled by a man. Rather, Jesus Christ Himself will rule the Millennial Kingdom. The Millennial Kingdom will represent the final fulfillment of the promises that God made with Abraham, David and the nation of Israel. This Kingdom is the heart of the Old Testament prophetic message – namely, that a Messiah would come to set up an earthly Kingdom over which He would physically rule.

This Kingdom is what Christ instructed His disciples to pray for when He taught them the Lord's prayer saying: "Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The people who will enjoy the Millennial Kingdom will include:

- Believers (both Jews and Gentiles) who were living at the time of Christ's Second Coming,

- People who made it through the Judgment of the Nations following the tribulation period,
- Old Testament saints (people obedient to God prior to Christ's coming),
- Believers who died during the Tribulation period, and
- The Church (people who have put their faith in Christ), which was raptured and returned with Christ at His Second Coming.

### **Characteristics of the Kingdom**

Christ's Kingdom will be unlike any other kingdom on the earth. It will be a time of great joy, peace and prosperity. The following are some of the characteristics of this Kingdom:

- It will last a thousand years (Revelation 20:3, 4, 5, 6, 7).
- This kingdom will be an earthly, literal kingdom (Isaiah 11, Zechariah 14:9-21, Matthew 6:10, Matthew 25:34), not a spiritual kingdom in heaven.
- Jesus will be physically present; He will live among the people in the city of Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:1-4, Ezekiel 43:7, Zechariah 2:10, 8:3, 22, Micah 4:1-3).
- Knowledge of the Lord will be universal, and all nations of the earth will worship Him during this time (Psalm 22:27, Daniel 7:14, 27, Zechariah 8:22-23, Isaiah 11:9).

- Foreigners (non-Israelites) will share in this Kingdom just like Israelites (Isaiah 56:3-8, Ezekiel 47:13-48:29).
- There will be no wars – Christ will bring peace to all nations for this thousand-year period (Isaiah 2:4, 60:17b-18, Zechariah 9:10, Ezekiel 34:27-28, Micah 4:3-4).
- The earth will be free from the influence of Satan, who will be bound in the Abyss during this time (Revelation 20:2-3).
- The Holy Spirit will be present throughout the earth and will indwell all believers (Ezekiel 36:27, 37:14, 39:29, Joel 2:28-29, Isaiah 32:15, 44:3).
- Righteousness will flourish during this time (Isaiah 11:3-5).
- Many physical health problems and infirmities will be eliminated – people who are blind will be able to see, the deaf will be able to hear, the lame will be able to walk and mutes will be able to speak (Isaiah 29:18, 33:24, 35:5-6).
- The length of human life will be extended – to several hundreds of years at least, and probably to the length of the entire thousand-year period (Isaiah 65:20, 22, Zechariah 8:4).
- The Millennial Kingdom will be a great time of joy (Isaiah 51:11, 65:18-19, Jeremiah 31:12-14).

### **Government of the Kingdom**

Christ will personally rule the Millennial Kingdom. As such, this Kingdom will be a theocracy (a government ruled by God), but not in the negative sense. Rather, as one would expect, Christ's rule will be righteous and just.

We know the following about the government of this Kingdom:

- Jesus will rule the whole world and will have the full authority and sovereign power of God (Psalm 2:8-9, Daniel 7:14, 27, Zechariah 9:10, 14:9, Isaiah 2:3, Micah 4:7, Luke 1:31-33, Revelation 19:16)
- He will judge between nations and will settle disputes among people (Isaiah 2:4, Micah 4:3).
- He will be righteous and just as a ruler (Psalms 72:2-4, Isaiah 3:5-11, 11:2-3, 29:17-21).
- He will be harsh with any disobedience or outbreak of sin (Psalms 2:9, Jeremiah 31:29-30, Zechariah 14:16-21). He will truly be 'a benevolent dictator'.
- Christ will be assisted in His rule by David, who will be resurrected along with the other Old Testament saints at the Judgment of the Nations (Hosea 3:5, Jeremiah 30:9, Ezekiel 37:24, Ezekiel 34:24-25), the twelve Apostles (Matthew 19:28, Luke 22:29-30), the Church (2 Timothy 2:12, Revelation 2:26, 3:21, 5:10, 20:6), and various others who will arise among the people (Jeremiah 30:21).

## **The Capital of the Kingdom – Jerusalem**

The capital of Christ's kingdom will be the city of Jerusalem. It will be the center of the world and the focal point of all earthly activity.

- The capital of the Kingdom will be the Temple on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, from which Christ will physically rule (Isaiah 2:1-4, 24:23, Ezekiel 43:7, Zechariah 2:10, 8:3, 22, Micah 4:1-3).
- Jerusalem will be the focal point of all earthly activity and worship. Peoples from all nations (including Gentiles) will stream into the city year after year to see and worship the Lord, celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, and to learn about the Lord and His laws (Zechariah 8:20-23, 14:16-17, Micah 4:1-3, Isaiah 2:1-4, 60:3-4, 66:20-20, Jeremiah 3:17, 33:9).
- Jerusalem will be a city of peace and its inhabitants will live in safety (Isaiah 2:4, 54:13b-15, 60:17b-18, 65:21-23, 66:12, Jeremiah 23:6, 33:16, Zechariah 8:4-5, 14:10).

## **The Jewish People**

At the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom, Christ will gather the Israelites from among all the nations and bring them back to Israel. God will then make a new covenant with the nation of Israel. This new covenant will replace the Old Covenant broken by the people of Israel. The basis of this new covenant is a restored relationship between God and the people of Israel – the Lord will once again be their God, and they will be His people.

In essence, this time represents the conclusion of the story of the prodigal son. The prodigal son is the story of a son (Israel) who left his father and squandered his inheritance, but in the end ultimately returned to the father and was welcomed back with open arms. The Millennium is this time, where Israel will return to the father through Christ and have a restored relationship with Him.

The Bible provides a lot of detail about this period:

- The people of Israel as a nation will repent of their past sins (Ezekiel 36:31, Zechariah 12:10-14) and the Lord will cleanse the Israelites of their past sins and forgive their wickedness (Isaiah 1:25, Jeremiah 31:34, 33:8, Ezekiel 16:62-63, 36:25-26, 37:23, Zechariah 13:1, Hebrews 8:12, Zephaniah 3:9).
- The Lord will put His law in their minds and in their hearts so that they will obey His laws and decrees (Deuteronomy 30:6, Isaiah 54:13a, 59:21, Jeremiah 31:33, 32:39, Ezekiel 11:19-20, 36:27, Hebrews 8:10).
- The Lord will once again be the God of all the tribes of Israel – including the ten lost tribes from the Northern Kingdom as well as the two tribes from the Southern Kingdom. Israel will be reborn spiritually and will serve the Lord (Jeremiah 30:22, 31:1, 6, 33-34, 32:38, Ezekiel 34:25-30, 36:24-30, 37:26-28, Isaiah 61:8-9, Hebrews 8:10-11).
- All of Israel will know and obey the Lord. The remaining people of Israel will do no wrong (Deuteronomy 30:8, Jeremiah 31:34, Ezekiel 20:40, 37:23-24, Zechariah 10:12, Hebrews 8:11, Zephaniah 3:13).



- God will make Israel prosperous and will bless the nation with abundant crops, riches, honor and praise (Deuteronomy 30:3, 9, Isaiah 35:1-2, 6-7, 60:5, Jeremiah 30:18-19, Ezekiel 34:26-27, 29, Zephaniah 3:20, Zechariah 14:14).
- God will greatly increase the numbers of Jewish people (Deuteronomy 30:5, Ezekiel 36:37-38, 37:26, Isaiah 60:22, Jeremiah 30:19). This is necessary, since very few will have survived the Tribulation period and there will be a great need to repopulate the earth.
- The Jewish people will receive honor and praise. The glory that existed during the reign of King Solomon will be restored (Isaiah 60:5,15, 66:12, Zephaniah 3:20, Zechariah 14:14).
- Israel will possess all of the Promised Land forevermore (Ezekiel 36:28a, 37:22,25, 47:14, Isaiah 60:21, Amos 9:15).
- All of this will not be for Israel's sake, but for God's – so that His name will no longer be disgraced and ridiculed because of the disobedience and punishment of Israel (Ezekiel 36:22, 32, Jeremiah 23:7-8).

### **Satan's Final Rebellion**

Despite the Millennium being an extended time of peace, prosperity and personal interaction with Christ, at the end of the Millennium, Satan will be set free from his confinement in the Abyss and will attempt one final rebellion:

*When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the*

*four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. (Revelation 20:7-10)*

The Bible says at the end of the Millennium, Satan will be released and will gather an innumerable number of people for battle against God's people in Jerusalem. This may seem hard to believe given the thousand year period of peace and prosperity under Christ, but it continues the cycle described throughout this booklet.

The question is often asked, "Who are these people? Won't all people who enter the Millennium be Christians? Why would they rebel with Satan?" The answer is that everyone who enters the Millennium will indeed be believers in Christ and will be obedient to Him, but these believers will have children during the Millennium, since the Bible says that the population of the earth will greatly increase during this time (Deut. 30:5; Ezek. 36:37-38, 37:26; Isa. 60:22; Jer. 30:19). Each new child will have to decide whether to accept or reject Christ for him or herself, just as they do today. It's logical then to assume that as the Millennium progresses, there will grow to be a large number of people who are not true believers in Christ. These unbelievers (probably young) will most likely make up the "countless people" to which this passage refers.

Satan's rebellion at the end of the Millennium will end before it begins. The Bible says that God will crush this final attempt by Satan and his

followers to rebel against God and throw them into the Lake of Fire. In essence, the final climatic battle as described in the Bible will be anything but climatic – it will end before it begins through God’s intervention.

This final rebellion by Satan and an innumerable number of people seems to show that despite a thousand years of humanity living under Christ’s perfect rule, Satan and mankind do not change – they are sinful at heart and will continually rebel against God. This continues the recurring theme we see time and time again throughout history.

After this rebellion, the Millennial Kingdom will come to and end. God will then destroy the heavens and the earth to create the “New Heavens and New earth” for eternity and will finally, once and for all, break the cycle of rebellion.



## THE ETERNAL STATE

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Over the course of this booklet, we've seen a recurring theme—the story of God's unfailing love and His desire to have that love reciprocated by His creation. In case after case, we see God creating (or selecting) a group of beings with free will for the purpose of returning His love through obedience and worship. Unfortunately, time and time again, we see God's creation rebelling against Him and becoming disobedient.

We've seen this repeating pattern happen six times throughout history—first with Satan and his demons; second with Adam and Eve prior to Noah; third with the descendants of Noah at the Tower of Babel; fourth with Abraham and the Jewish people; fifth with the Church Age; and sixth with the people living during the Millennium.

It is after this sixth and final rebellion that God will destroy the existing heaven and earth (all of the known universe) and start over again a seventh time, by creating a new heaven and a new earth and a new universe. Fortunately, this seventh and final time will succeed, and God's creation will finally live for eternity in close, personal and right relationship with their Creator.

Most people believe when they die, they go to heaven to spend eternity with God. This is actually not the case. When a believer dies, he or she will indeed go to heaven, but will not spend eternity there.

After the Millennium, God will judge all unbelievers at the Judgment of the Unserved Dead, He will then destroy the heavens and the earth and all that is in them with fire and create a 'new heaven' and a 'new earth'. In essence, God will 'cleanse' all of His creation of the evil that occurred during Satan's final rebellion just as he previously 'cleansed' the earth of the evil that existed during the days of Noah with the flood.

The difference is that this time, He will destroy (or 'baptize') the earth and heavens by fire instead of by water:

*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare...That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. (2 Peter 3:10-12)*

Think of this as a second 'big bang' – an event caused by God so large and powerful that it literally destroys all time, energy, space and matter and allows God to start all over again. We don't know a lot about this destruction other than that it will happen by fire after the Judgment of the Unserved (Revelation 21:1, 2 Peter 3:7, 12, Zephaniah 3:8), it will be accompanied by a great noise – literally translated "a big bang" (2 Peter 3:10) and everything in existence will be wiped clean and recreated from new (Revelation 21:5, 2 Peter 3:10).

God will then create a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1). These two creations, which had been two different realms in the old order, will be one in the same in the new order.

The key difference between Christ's Kingdom as it existed during the Millennium and this new creation will be that God will rule this

Kingdom instead of Christ. The Bible says that Jesus will quite literally “hand over His Kingdom to God” (1 Corinthians 15:24-28), who will interact with mankind at a personal level in this new creation.

In essence, Christ’s Millennial Kingdom will be just a foreshadow of what life will be like in the Eternal State. Although the Millennium will be very different from the world as it stands today, it will still fall short of the perfection and glory that will exist in the Eternal State with God.

The table below shows the key differences between the Millennium and the Eternal State:

| <b>The Millennium</b>  | <b>The Eternal State</b>   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ruled by Christ.</li><li>• People will have direct interaction with Christ.</li><li>• An extension of the human history on earth.</li><li>• Set duration of a thousand years.</li><li>• Sin will still be present.</li><li>• People will have children, each of which will have a decision of whether to accept or reject Christ as his or her savior.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ruled by God.</li><li>• People will have direct interaction with God.</li><li>• Not associated with human history or the physical earth.</li><li>• Not bound by time – will last forever.</li><li>• No sin will exist.</li><li>• No new people will be added to the human race. Everyone’s destiny will be settled for eternity.</li></ul> |

### **Characteristics of the New Creation**

Not much is said in the Bible about what life will be like in the “new heavens” and the “new earth.” What we do know is that God will be personally present and this will be a time of great joy. Unlike the

Millennial Kingdom, which will be ruled by Christ, God will rule eternity. The Bible says Jesus will abdicate His throne and 'hand over the kingdom to God'. Everything will be subject to God, including Christ (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). God will personally live with mankind and interact with mankind just as He did in the Garden of Eden. He will be physically present and will interact with people face to face (1 John 3:2, 1 Revelation 21:3, 22:4).

During this time, the Bible says there will be no sin, for all the powers of evil (including Satan) will have been expelled to the Lake of Fire (Revelation 21:8). This will be a time of immense joy – there will be no death, mourning, crying or pain (Revelation 21:4).

### **The New Jerusalem**

The Eternal State will be centered on the New Jerusalem – a magnificent city that will serve as the residence for all believers for eternity. This is what Christ referred to when He told His disciples:

*In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:2-3)*

The New Jerusalem will exist for all eternity. It will be the final dwelling place for all believers (Revelation 3:12, 21-22). The last two chapters in the book of Revelation give us a glimpse of this wonderful place:



- The throne of God and of Christ will be in the city (Revelation 22:3).
- There will be no Temple in the New Jerusalem, because the Lord God and Jesus will be its Temple (Revelation 21:22).
- There will be no night and day or need for the sun, moon or light. The Glory of God and Jesus will provide light for the Kingdom (Revelation 21:11, 23, 25, 22:5).
- The city will be laid out as either a cube or a pyramid – 1,380 miles on every side (length, width and height – Revelation 21:16-17). This would roughly be about two-thirds the size of the continental United States. It has been calculated that even if only 25 percent of this space were used for living space, 20 billion people could be accommodated with plenty of room.
- The city and its streets will be made of gold (Revelation 21:18, 21:21b).

Clearly God's eternal city will be a wonderful place, but as we've seen throughout this study of God's history, it will truly be unique in that the Bible says there will be no sin or rebellion, and everyone will walk with God forever. As such, the Eternal State will be like a return to the Garden of Eden – a place where God walked with mankind and had a very real and personal interaction with his creation.

And, of course, that is the point of it all – God simply wants to have His love reciprocated by His creation. Even though in case after case throughout history, we see God's creation rebelling against Him and becoming disobedient, this seventh and final time, we see his creation

restored to the relationship with God as He intended. We see the prodigal son having returned to the father and living forever in a close and personal relationship. That is all God wants and is his ultimate plan for history.