

# DIVINE PLAN OF THE AGES

*The history of man is full of trouble and sorrow. But it will not always be so. God has promised, though “weeping may stay for the night, joy comes in the morning.” (Psalms 30:5) Yes, the present age of sin is soon to be replaced with a new age of joy for all people, which will last forever.*

Can we believe God's promise? Surely, we can! There is so much in the world and in the Bible which shows the truth of God's Word. The orderliness of the stars and the lovely earth for man's home are evidences of an intelligent and powerful Creator. Discoveries in the ruins of ancient cities have proven that Bible history is accurate. The Law which God gave to Moses has been found very just, and therefore copied in large part by many nations.

Even more impressive is the way the predictions of the Bible have come true. The Israelites are returning to the land of promise (Jer. 16:14-16; Amos 9:14-15). The whole world is preparing for war (Joel 3:9-10; Matt. 24:6-7), bringing a time of trouble such as never was in the past. (Matt. 24:21-22; 2 Tim. 3:1-4) Worldly knowledge is rapidly increasing, but the true knowledge of God is very hard to find. (Dan. 12:4; Amos 8:11-12) All of this is happening today. This gives us confidence in the Bible and in God's promises for the future.

## A CHART OF THE AGES

The Bible tells us that God, as our Heavenly Father, has much love for each of us as His children. This love is best seen in a wonderful plan of salvation planned by Him. As we come to understand that plan, we see more fully God's goodness and His loving concern for all people – every race, tribe, and language.

God's plan is orderly and progressive. It is like a blueprint laid out by a Master Builder even before the earth was formed. Through the prophet Habakkuk, God said that the vision of His plan of salvation would be written down on a chart and made plain. (Hab. 2:2, 3) The Chart of the Ages shows the unfolding of that plan, using a diagram with symbols to lay out the details. Briefly, the chart gives an overview of all that God will do in restoring man to the perfection lost in Eden and in calling out a chosen few to assist Jesus in blessing all peoples.

## TIME PERIODS

In 2 Timothy 2:15, the Apostle Paul urges us to “*study [God's Word] so that we*

*may be approved of Him, rightly dividing [skillfully handling] the word of truth.”*

This is the first thing which the Chart of the Ages helps us to do. The half-circles across the top of the chart make helpful time divisions of man's history on earth, which are called worlds. With a knowledge of these time features, it is possible to harmonize many seemingly conflicting Scriptures.

The three worlds are shown from left to right on top of the chart; these are frequently referred to in Scriptures. “A” is called by Peter “*the world that was;*” “B” by Paul “*the present evil world;*” and “C” “*the world to come.*” The first world lasted from man's creation until the flood; the second lasts from the flood to the start of Christ's Millennial reign; and the third will extend onward from this point throughout all eternity.

Time periods “B” and “C” are subdivided into ages, which illustrate further the steps of the Divine Plan and the various expressions of God's will. “D” is the Patriarchal Age into which Noah survived, and in which Job, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived. Many of their experiences were types\*\* or previews of things to come. “E” is the Jewish Age, extending from the death of Jacob to the time of Christ: this was the period in which the Jewish nation was especially favored by God as His chosen people. The Law Covenant\*\* was made with them, and they were told to live separately from the unbelieving nations around them. Israel was also a type of things to follow. (1 Cor. 10:11)

“F” is the Gospel Age, in which the Church\*\*, the body members of Christ, are called out of the world; theirs is the “*high calling*” to “*glory, honor, and immortality,*” partakers of the divine nature. While such are trying to make their calling and election sure, evil is permitted to rule in the world as a test of their faithfulness. Only such as are willing to suffer with Jesus and to lay down their lives in consecration\*\* to God in the midst of an unbelieving world will be considered worthy of sharing with Jesus in his glorious reign.

“G” is the Millennial Age in which the reign of Christ and the Church takes place, for the purpose of putting down all

the enemies of God and of blessing all the families of the earth. Peter spoke of this age as “*the times of restitution\*\* of all things spoken by the mouth of God's holy prophets in ages past.*” (Acts 3:21) It is during these times that the perfect conditions of Paradise are restored, peace established, hunger and want removed, and sin and death forever blotted out. At its close, there is a “*Little Season*” of testing (Rev. 20:7-10), which will see Satan and the willfully wicked destroyed in the Second Death, leaving here a perfect earth with nothing to mar its beauty and harmony. Then will begin the Ages to Come, “H”, enduring without end: ages of perfection, blessedness, and happiness for all.

The ends of the Jewish and Gospel Ages are called “Harvests,” in which there is a completion of the work of those periods. In the harvest of the Jewish Age, a few “Israelites indeed” – true wheat – were separated from the chaff, before Israel's national existence came to a close with the destruction of Jerusalem. Likewise at the close of the Gospel Age, God's elect – true wheat – are gathered from the tares, as the prophesied time of trouble destroys the present evil social order, preparing the way for Christ's Kingdom.

## STEPS TO GLORY

In the makeup of the chart, the progression of the ages has been shown by going from left to right. Now note another feature: there are several level lines with letters which are called “Planes.” These represent basic kinds of life and the steps leading up to them. “N” is the plane of God's favor. It includes the perfect human nature, a sinless state, such as Adam had before he fell. When he disobeyed God, he fell to the sinful plane, shown by line “R.” The entire world of mankind has been on plane “R” from that time onward, since all are reckoned as condemned in Adam.

“N” is also the plane occupied by those who are coming near to God, and are being

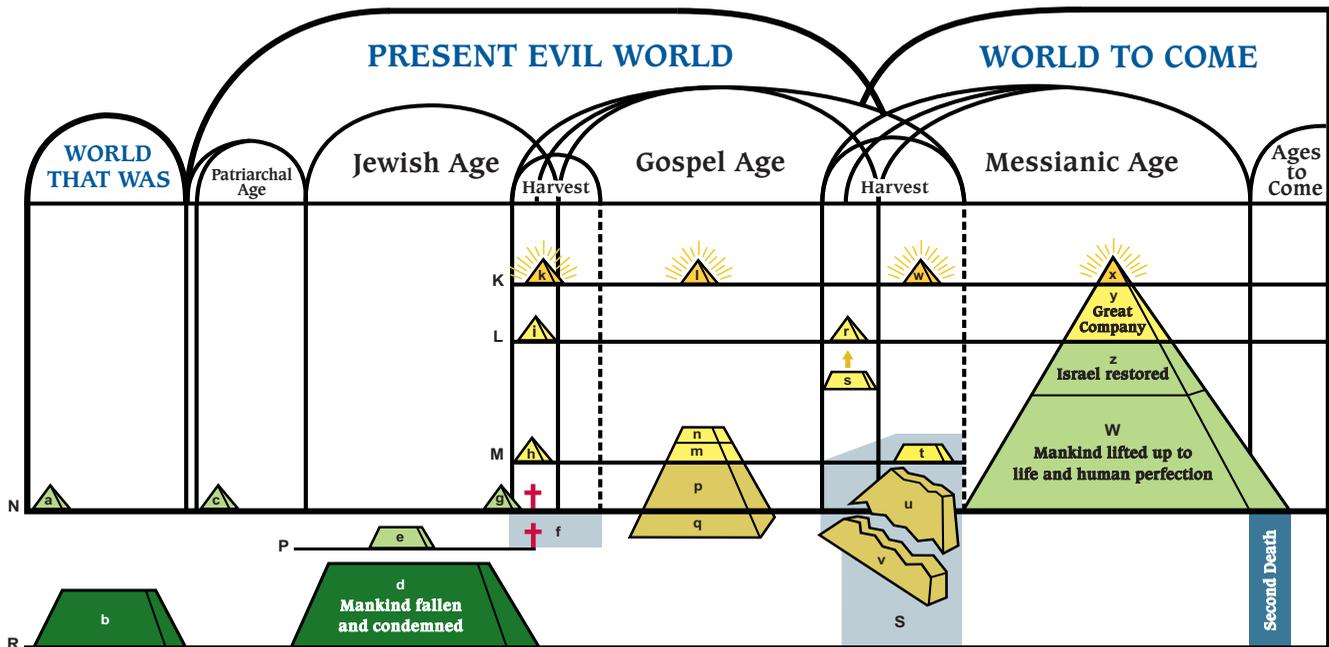
\* See Word List on page 4.

\*\* See Key to Chart of Ages, which lists the appropriate Bible texts.

# CHART OF THE AGES

ILLUSTRATING THE PLAN OF GOD FOR BRINGING MANY SONS TO GLORY, AND HIS PURPOSE ---

“... to reunite all things under one Head, even under the Christ, the things in heaven and the things on earth --- under Him.” Eph.1:10



“Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables” Habakkuk 2:2

## KEY TO CHART OF THE AGES

### AGES (Time Periods):

- A The world that was – 1st dispensation (2 Peter 3:6, Gen. 6:11-13)
- B The present evil world – 2nd dispensation (Gal. 1:4, Mal. 3:15)
- C The world to come – 3rd dispensation (Heb. 2:5, 2 Peter 3:13, Eph. 1:10)
- D Patriarchal Age (Acts 7:8)
- E Jewish Age (Deut. 7:6, Psalms 147:19-20)
- F Gospel Age (Mark 1:14-15, Acts 15:14, Matt. 24:14)
- G Messianic Age (1 Cor. 15:25, Rev. 20:1-6)
- H Ages to come (Eph. 2:7, 3:21)
- f Israel’s time of trouble in Jewish harvest: separation of wheat and chaff (Luke 3:16-17)
- S World’s time of trouble in Gospel harvest: separation of wheat & tares (Matt. 13:30, 38-40, Rev. 14:15, 18)
- T Satan’s little season: separation of sheep & goats (Matt. 25:31-32, Rev. 20:7-10, 14-15, 1 Cor. 15:26)

### PLANES (Steps to Glory):

- K Condition of divine glory & power of office (Phil. 2:9-11, Rev. 3:21)
- L Condition of spirit birth (John 3:8, 1 John 3:2)
- M Condition of spirit begettal (Rom. 12:1, 1 Peter 1:3-4)
- N Condition of God’s favor (to humans) (James 2:23, Rom. 5:8-9, 19)
- P Condition of God’s typical favor (Lev. 16:30, Heb. 9:7-10)

R Condition of sin and depravity (Rom. 5:12, Isaiah 64:6, Rom. 3:10)

### PYRAMIDS (Classes of People):

- a Adam in perfection (Gen. 1:27, 31)
- b Fallen Adam and his posterity, before the flood (Gen. 6:5)
- c Ancient worthies as individuals (Rom. 4:2-3, Ezekiel 14:20, Heb. 11)
- d Mankind from flood to Messianic Age (Rom. 5:12, 1 John 5:19)
- e Fleshly Israel typically justified as a nation (Lev. 16:33-34, Heb. 10:1)

### CHRIST

- g Jesus at age 30, a perfect man (Heb. 10:5, John 1:29-32)
- h Jesus, spirit-begotten at Jordan (Matt. 3:13-17, Heb. 4:15)
- i Jesus, resurrected as a divine being (Matt. 28:18, John 5:26)
- k Jesus, 40 days after resurrection, in divine glory (Acts 1:9, Heb. 9:24)
- l Jesus, in Gospel Age, set down with Father on throne (Heb. 6:20, Rev. 3:21)

### CHRISTIANS IN GOSPEL AGE

- m Spirit-begotten class who become the Great Company (1 Cor. 3:11, 15)
- n Spirit-begotten class who become the Bride of Christ (Rom. 12:1-2, 1 Peter 2:9-10, Gal. 5:22-25)
- p Believers, but not fully consecrated (Mark

- 9:41, Acts 26:27-28, Matt. 22:14)
- q “Wolves in sheep’s clothing”; churchgoers but not believers; hypocrites (Zech. 11:16, Matt. 7:15, 15:8-9)

### DURING GOSPEL HARVEST

- r Jesus, in His second advent (John 14:3, 1 Thess. 4:16)
- s Little Flock, separating from Babylon (Rev. 18:1-5, 1 Thess. 4:16-17)
- t Great Company, failing to gain chief reward (Matt. 25:1-3, 5-8, 11-12; 1 Cor. 3:13, 15)
- u Babylon, larger part of the nominal church, falling: some remaining on Plane N, others falling below (Rev. 3:15-16, 16:19)
- v Babylon, hypocrite element of nominal church, falling to Plane R with unbelievers (Rev. 18:2, Matt. 24:51)
- w The glorified Christ, head & body (Rev. 19:7-8, 21:2)

### DURING MILLENNIAL AGE

- x The glorified Christ class, reigning (Jude 14-15, Rev. 3:21, 20:4-6)
- y The Great Company class (Ezekiel 44:10-14, Rev. 7:9-10, 13-17, 19:1)
- z Fleshly Israel restored and in prominence (Rom. 11:25-29, Zech. 8:13-23)
- W Mankind restored to perfection and harmony with God (Rev. 21:1-4, Isaiah 35)

drawn by Him through faith in Jesus. If these continue in the way to the point of consecrating their all, and laying down their lives in sacrifice, God fully justifies\*\* them, considering them holy and free from sin, on the basis of Jesus' merit. These are then shown on plane "M," the plane of spirit begetting, the condition of having been begotten of God's spirit to a new nature. Although still human, they are no longer reckoned as such in God's sight, but as spiritual, for their human nature is reckoned as sacrificed and given up. They become "new creatures in Christ Jesus," with old hopes and the human will fully surrendered. This is the plane on which the true followers of Christ are pictured during the present life.

But it is one thing to covenant with God to live a consecrated life and yet another to actually carry out this covenant until death. Those found faithful will be resurrected to life on plane "L," which represents the condition of spirit birth. This is a full entrance into life as a spirit being, taking on the nature of angels, with powers and traits much higher than the human. A further step, and the highest which can be attained, is plane "K," which is the glory of office or position: not only changed to the spirit nature, but sitting on Jesus' throne, exalted with him to the right hand of the Majesty on high.

## CLASSES OF PEOPLE

Another feature of the chart is the use of pyramids to represent certain people prominent in Scripture and the various classes of mankind. Adam as a perfect man before he sinned is shown by a small complete pyramid, "a." Below him is "b," an incomplete, topless pyramid, representing the imperfect world of mankind before the flood, degraded by sin; "d" continues this picture of sinful humanity, increasing in number after the flood, until the work of the Millennium begins.

Little pyramid "c" shows Abraham and other worthies whom God considered His friends — righteous in His sight. Though actually yet imperfect, they were reckoned as justified because of their strong faith. They contrasted sharply with sinners on plane "R," counted as enemies of God because of their wicked works. Pyramid "e" represents natural Israel during the Jewish Age, when animal sacrifices were accepted by God as a typical cleansing for the sins of the nation. This system of animal sacrifices under the Law of Moses did not fully atone for the sins of the people, but it pointed forward as a type to the greater sacrifice of

Christ which actually would take away sin. Thus fleshly Israel as a nation is shown on plane "P," that of typical justification.

Little pyramids "g," "h," "i," "k," and "l" all picture Jesus. At age 30 as a perfect man ("g") he was baptized at the River Jordan, anointed with God's spirit, and begotten to plane "M" (pyramid "h"). There for 3½ years, he laid down his human life as he taught men about God and the coming Kingdom, healed diseases, and called out disciples to follow him. His ministry ended with his death at Calvary, shown by the cross on plane "N," where he offered himself as the ransom\* for Adam's disobedience. This was the single most important event in the history of the world, for which mankind will ever be grateful; for all hope of future life depends upon obtaining release from the Adamic penalty through the merit of Christ's ransom sacrifice.

After being dead for parts of three days, Jesus was raised to newness of life on plane "L," where he was born of the spirit ("i"), as a kind of firstfruits of those who were dead. For 40 days he appeared to his disciples to encourage and strengthen them, then ascended to the glory of his office as a resurrected spirit being on the highest (divine) plane of existence, level "K," shown by little pyramids "k" and "l". Christ's Second Coming near the end of the Gospel Age is shown by "r," before he is honored in the eyes of the world. During the Harvest of the Gospel Age, he is joined by the faithful overcomers who have followed in his steps, "s." Together, they make up The Christ class, Head and Body, shown in pyramid "w" in the Harvest and by "x" as reigning in glory in the Millennial Age.

Look now at the large imperfect pyramid of the Gospel Age, which falls apart during the Harvest of that age. It represents the nominal church as a whole, all parts of which claim to be of the body of Christ. Note that parts "n" and "m" are both on the spirit begotten plane "M"; these represent those who become the Bride of Christ and the Great Company, respectively. Only the Bride class ("n") is fully faithful to its covenant and overcomes the world, the flesh, and the devil. These are a "Little Flock" to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give positions of honor (pyramid "x") in the heavenly Kingdom. The larger company "m" shrinks back from carrying out its covenant and thus loses the right to plane "K," the throne of glory; nevertheless, God still loves them and will fit them for positions of lesser honor on plane "L" (pyramid "y") in the heavenly kingdom.

Portion "p" represents the great majority

of the nominal church, which is shown on plane "N"; they are considered on a higher level than the sinful world because they have believed to some extent in the work of Jesus. However, they fail to progress to the point of consecrating their all to God's service, they are not spirit begotten nor fully justified, and hence not shown on plane "M." In the resurrection, this class, a part of "W" in the Millennial Age pyramid, will be raised to human life, making rapid progress toward perfection while enjoying all the privileges of the earthly Kingdom.

Part "q" represents a class that mingled with the nominal church but never did believe in Jesus. They are "wolves in sheep's clothing," and are in no sense a part of the Church, to which their association brings great injury. They are all tares ("v") who will be symbolically burned in the Harvest time, though still to be brought forth in the general resurrection to a full opportunity of gaining everlasting human life by instruction in righteousness.

The shaded portion, "S," represents the world's time of trouble in the Gospel Harvest, during which various parts of the nominal church, "u" and "v," fall to pieces, and the Great Company ("t") fails to gain the chief reward. Only the Little Flock ("s"), as true and ripe wheat, is able to separate itself from the tares and to avoid the contamination of the nominal church, which the Lord calls "Babylon," or confusion.

## REWARDS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In the completed picture of the Millennial Age, shown by the large perfect pyramid, all four classes of mankind that will receive everlasting life are pictured. At the top are the Church and Great Company ("x" and "y"), both on spirit planes, as previously stated. Below them, on the level of perfect humanity, are shown Israel as a restored nation ("z") in a position of prominence, and the remainder of mankind ("W"), all the families of the earth, uplifted and in harmony with God. When all the wicked have been destroyed in the Second Death, God's great Plan of the Ages will be fully complete. Then will come to pass those blessed words, "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying . . . for the former things are passed away." (Rev. 21:4)

What a magnificent plan is this! Surely we see in it the fullness of our Father's love.

But the privilege of understanding God's plan also brings responsibility. God is calling those who are willing to show their appreciation by their devotion to Him, by

studying His Word, by growing in grace and knowledge, and by telling others the gospel\*\* of the Kingdom. Let us heed

God's call, count the cost, and with His help, enter the race-course which leads to life eternal with our Savior. If found

faithful, we shall be given the privilege of blessing all people on earth and bringing praise and glory to our Father in heaven.

---

## **WORD LIST**

**CHURCH.** The body of believers, who are called out of the world to follow Jesus.

**CONSECRATION.** Total devotion to God; sacrificing self in Christian service. Lev. 8:30; Matt. 16:24.

**COVENANT.** A solemn agreement, usually between God and man.

**GOSPEL.** Good news, especially of salvation through Christ and of God's coming Kingdom blessings.

**JUSTIFICATION.** God's gracious act of declaring the sinner righteous in His sight, free from the Adamic condemnation. Romans 5:1-9.

**RANSOM.** An exact, corresponding price. Jesus' sacrifice as a substitute for Adam, which will release mankind from death. 1 Tim. 2:5-6.

**RESTITUTION.** Restoration; a return to a previous condition which was lost.  
Acts 3:21

**TYPE.** A pattern or preview of something greater to come; as, Abraham offering Isaac is a picture of God sacrificing His Son Jesus.

---

## QUESTIONS

1. What are the ages in the plan of God? (page1,2)
2. What was the main purpose of Christ's first presence? What is the purpose of His second presence? (page 1)
3. What are the Christian's steps to glory? Explain each one. (pages 1, 3)
4. What will be the outcome of the Millennial Age? (page2)