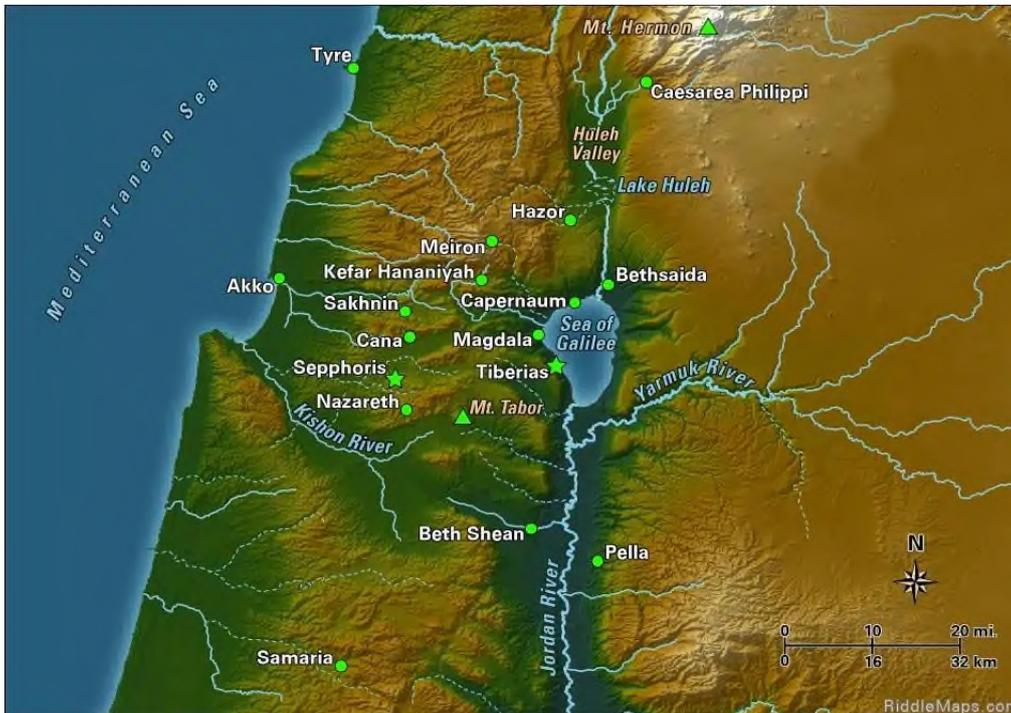


The Nine Time Periods in the LORD's Plan for Mankind

by Jeremy James



The Bible is a truly astonishing historical document. Without it we would have no knowledge of our past or our future. We would not even have an understanding of our true spiritual condition. Worst of all, we would have no hope of redemption and no prospect before us but death and decay.

The Enemy tries to give us hope by offering mystical experiences and seemingly profound scientific theories, not to mention a wealth of promises which lack any validity. He has been indoctrinating mankind along these lines for thousands of years.

Our children have been getting a steady dose of this false cosmic narrative from every direction, especially movies and television programs. One of these is the introductory segment of a comedy series called *The Big Bang Theory*. Beginning in 2007, it ran for 12 seasons and comprised 279 episodes. A great many young people have seen most of the episodes, often multiple times.

The theme song races through the evolutionary theory of mankind and the modern hypothesis that the entire universe began with a massive explosion known as the “big bang”. The segment throws in a ragbag of evolutionary images along the way, including Pangea and Neanderthals, plus dozens of visual references to technology and historical events.

Everything is ascribed to the evolutionary ‘cooling’ of the universe after the “big bang”, with express mention of astronomy, music, astrology, and religion. The word ‘Deuteronomy’ is even included in this breathless summary of cosmic evolution and human history. Thus the Bible itself, it implies, was produced by the “big bang.”

Overall the words “big bang” are mentioned seven times.



Random frames from the introduction to *The Big Bang Theory*

All of this is crammed into just 16 seconds! Regular viewers imbibe the segment and store it away in their subconscious mind, unaware that their perception of reality is being shaped by the architects of the New World Order. The extreme pace at which the material is presented, both audible and visual, is such that viewers have no time to digest it and probably could not describe more than 5 percent of its contents. In a sense it is subliminal programming aimed at the lowest threshold of conscious awareness.

A false sense of time and space

Television series like this are driving a false sense of space and time into the minds of our young people. Their perspective on history is being destroyed, while the universe itself is conceived as nothing but a random fragment strewn from an inconceivably large explosion fourteen billion years ago in a dense cloud of primitive gases.

Few Christians are unaffected by this type of mental conditioning. Many still think the earth is a tiny speck at the edge of a vast cosmos that consists almost entirely of cold empty space, and that in the far distant past enormous lizards roamed the grassy plains for 180 million years!

If rational adults, who profess to believe God’s Word, can still give credence to this kind of thing, then we should hardly be surprised that the Enemy has also induced many scholars, who interpret the Word in their commentaries and other expository works, to misconstrue the periods of time which the LORD has assigned to His redemptive plan for mankind.

God wants us to understand history

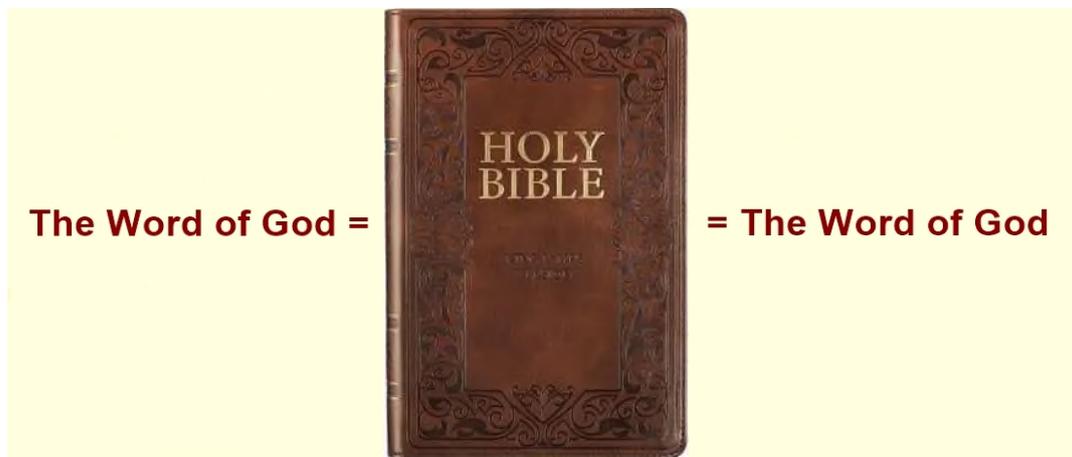
We forget that the LORD included in His Word a powerful endorsement of history as a subject worthy of our study. Isaiah cites the LORD’s injunction: “**Remember the former things of old**” (46:9).

Again and again the author of Ecclesiastes refers to all that is “under the sun” and declares that none of what we see is new. How can we know this is true unless we study history, and do so diligently?

**“The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be;
and that which is done is that which shall be done:
and there is no new thing under the sun.”
(Ecclesiastes 1:9)**

The account of history which we must take the greatest care to study diligently is the one given to us by God!

Alas, in their pride and credulity many have decided that His immutable account needs to be modified, that it cannot possibly mean what it says. But they are wrong.



These same critics include among their number scholars and academics who imagine, for reasons known only to themselves, that history itself can only be studied by reference to events that have already occurred. But again they are wrong. While men are constrained in this way, God is not. He sees all of history, the complete story of mankind, not only the part that has already been made manifest but the part that has yet to be fulfilled:

“I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:”

(Isaiah 46:9-10)

“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” (Acts 15:18)

“...the works were finished from the foundation of the world.” (Hebrews 4:3)

The First Time Period

This was an age of childlike trust, when Adam and Eve were created. They had no knowledge of good and evil, nor did they need it. However they must have understood these terms since God had used them. They must also have understood the concept of death, even though they had no experience of it. The Enemy took advantage of their remarkable intelligence to convince them that the single stipulation that God had made was actually designed to limit them.

The duration of this time period could hardly have been more than a couple of weeks, otherwise Eve would have become pregnant before she rebelled. The Word of God tells us that their first child was conceived after they left the garden.

We need to remember that these two people had a perfect connection with God. They enjoyed the sinless purity that Jesus alone possessed. In our existing condition we cannot understand why they did what they did, but we will likely be able in due course. As the Word of God states:

“...now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” (1 Corinthians 13:12)

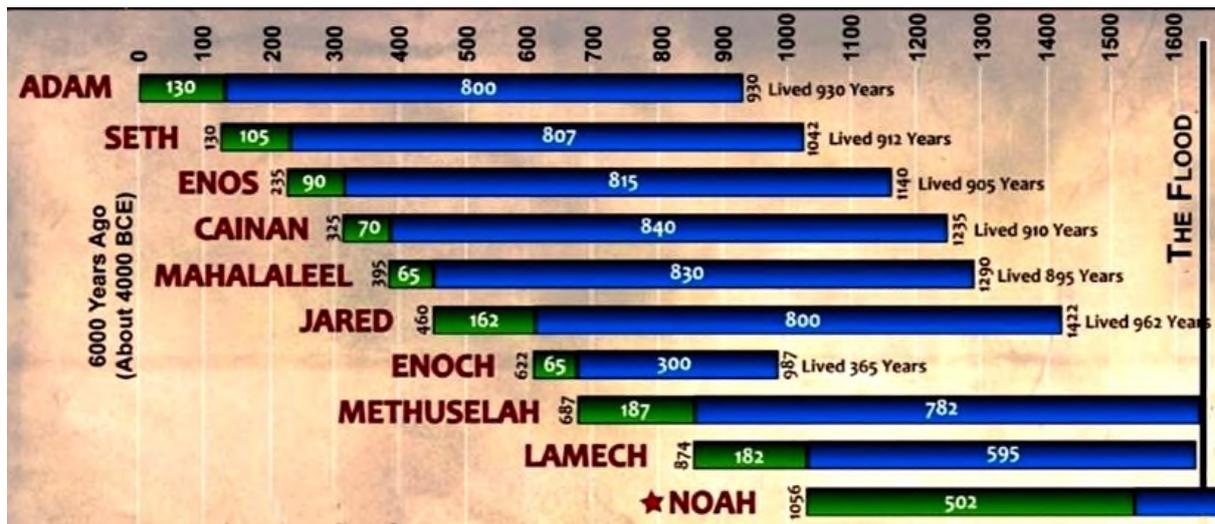


The Second Time Period

The second time period lasted a little over 1,600 years and spanned the lives of just two people, Adam and Methuselah. It is hard to believe that two generations could embrace such a huge segment of human history. By allowing men to live this long, God was greatly extending the opportunity they had to reflect on what had happened to mankind. Alas, instead of using this opportunity to re-establish their relationship with God, they took the rebelliousness of Adam to its utmost extreme. Even though they now had the ability to distinguish between good from evil, which should have led them in the right direction, they persistently ignored what their conscience was telling them and sinned exceedingly.

Their permissive and rebellious attitude escalated to the point where, had God not destroyed mankind in the Flood, society would have destroyed itself in any event through violence, corruption and debauchery.

God sent the Flood to enable mankind to begin again, as it were. The eight who survived, as well as their immediate descendants, had 1600 years of human history to reflect upon. The Flood was a monumental judgment on mankind, but it was also an act of mercy. If left to his own devices, man of himself would never have found a path to repentance.



The Third Time Period

The next time period began with an extraordinary sign from God. It was the first time He sent a message to mankind as a whole. The rainbow was a new physical phenomenon, observable by all. It was a visible token of a covenant that God was making with mankind, an unconditional covenant. He was saying, through the prophet Noah, that He would never again send an all-consuming Deluge to cover the earth.

In doing this He was reaching out to mankind, inviting His creation to think about Him in an entirely new way. He was a God of mercy, a covenant-keeping God, who took a personal interest in humanity. Since man had failed to live in accordance with the counsel of his own conscience, God was saying, in effect, *I will work with you but you've got to trust Me.*

His prophet, Noah, was also the father of mankind. Everyone on earth thereafter descended directly from him. Thus in a sense Noah was a second Adam. By making murder a crime which was punishable by execution – which God specifically did not do during the Second Time Period, allowing Cain to survive and even giving him a sign for his own protection – Noah was initiating something new in the earth, a lawful government with sovereign authority.

What God intended for order and social harmony, however, man wanted to use for power and control. The ultimate expression of this was Nimrod, whose government was used expressly as a center of rebellion against God. The LORD had to undertake a remarkable intervention in order to overturn his devious plan.



Nimrod wanted three forms of unity – political, social, and religious. The first would come by concentrating the center of earthly power in one location, Babel and the plain of Shinar. The second would come naturally from the common language already spoken across his empire. And the third would come through the construction of a high-rise temple to honor the host of heaven. God shattered all three at one go by dividing their universal language into dozens of distinct languages.

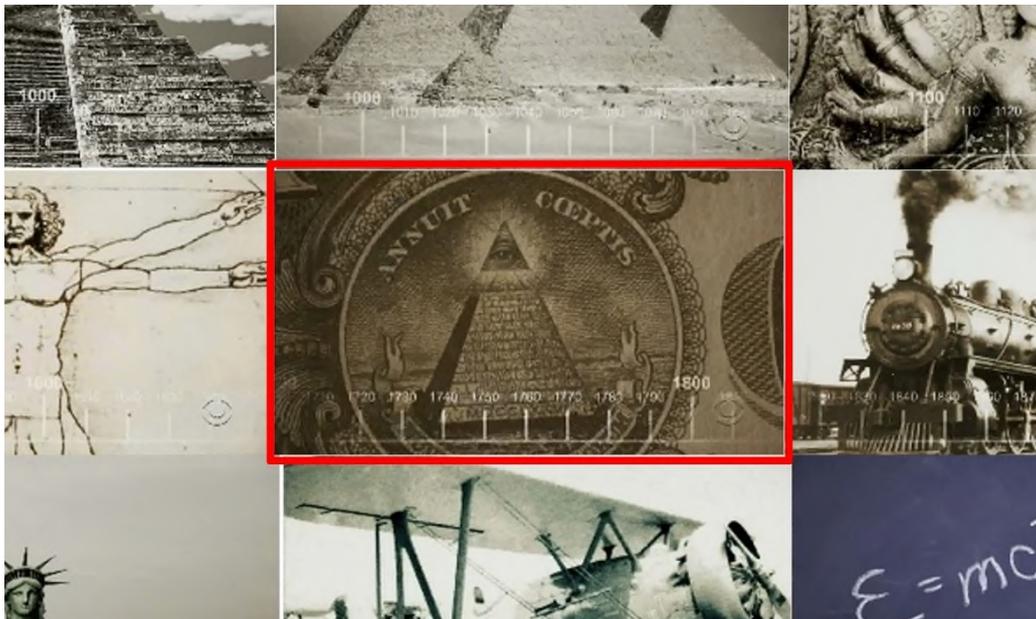
This was the second time since the Flood that God sent a message to all mankind. Everyone on earth was shown that, if man ever again attempted to create a world government, He had the power to intervene. The multiplication of languages and the resulting creation and dispersal of racial groups was an exercise in sovereignty – earthly government – which far surpassed anything Nimrod and his confederates could achieve.

God also challenged mankind after the Flood by introducing a new dietary prohibition. It is curious that the prohibition that Adam and Eve had been asked to observe was also dietary. Through His prophet, Noah, God forbade mankind to consume the blood of animals. This was a further sign of His sovereignty. It showed that He reserved the right to make laws for mankind and that, by this means, human government would in due course be regulated.

The Third Time Period ran from the Flood to the year that God called Abram out of Ur in Chaldea, a city close to Babylon. (This is the origin of the word *Hebrew*, which means “man from beyond,” meaning beyond the river Euphrates.) Abram left the land of Chaldea around 2090 BC or roughly 250 years after the Flood.

- the so-called *new world order*

The New World Order, which the Children of Wickedness are currently trying to establish on the earth, is a carefully planned attempt to do what Nimrod was unable to do. Its leaders will resort to great violence to impose their will, but God will intervene and destroy their work, their “one world” government and their “one world” religion, just as He did in the time of Nimrod.



Symbol of the New World Order (as seen on *The Big Bang Theory*)

The Fourth Time Period

The next time period began with Abraham and ended with the giving of the Law to the children of Israel on Mount Sinai around 1445 BC.

The renaming of Abram is highly significant since it denoted a fundamental change in his standing before the world and before God.

Up to then God had chosen only two men, Adam and Noah. Both were fathers of mankind. Abraham was called by God to become a father of nations, but not mankind as a whole (as far as we know). Just how far his paternity will spread we do not know. It is quite possible that, by the end of the Millennium, a great proportion of the population of the earth will be descendants of Abraham, if not Jacob:

“And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions” (Genesis 24:60)

“The LORD God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you, as he hath promised you!” (Deuteronomy 1:11) [At that time the children of Israel numbered around 3 million]

In this time period God was setting up a nation of his own, a nation which would eventually consist only of descendants of Abraham’s grandson, Jacob. While the basis on which this new nation was established made provision for the assimilation of Gentiles, it was overwhelmingly of Israelite descent.



“... God will provide himself a lamb...” (Genesis 22:8)

While it is not fashionable today to refer to the children of Israel (or Jacob) as God’s chosen people, it is obvious that they were! God, in His sovereign will, created a nation for His own purposes. He didn’t simply choose an existing nation but built an entirely new one, beginning with a chosen individual. What is more, He changed the name of the man’s wife and gave her a miraculous child, to whom He also gave a name – Isaac. This miraculous child then inherited all of the promises that He had made to Abraham.

Isaac went on to have a son who in turn inherited the promises made both to himself and to Abraham, and he too was given a new name by God.

We should be eternally grateful that He did this! History has clearly shown that, unless God Himself took these radical steps, mankind would never have found a path to repentance. Neither would a family or bloodline have emerged, selected by God, through which His Son could come into the world as our Redeemer.

God also gave them an outward sign of their calling – male circumcision. He promised, in an unconditional covenant, that He would give them, in perpetuity, an extensive stretch of land for their own habitation. Interestingly, to the present day, virtually all nations of the earth have contested His right to do so! They are greatly vexed that He would favor and elevate one nation in this way, but they forget – to their shame – that He took this course in order to *bless* every nation on earth.

A failure to properly understand the time periods in God’s plan for mankind has led to much confusion down the centuries. During each respective period He was doing something unique, something specific to mankind at that time, which brought His redemptive plan a step closer to fruition. We need to have regard to this process, this progressive revelation of His intentions, when we interpret His Word.



Aerial view of the excavations of Biblical Shiloh, 2019.

Shiloh was the first home of the Tabernacle before God permitted the Philistines to destroy the city and abscond with the Ark. This judgment, which took place around 1050 BC, was a dire warning of what would happen to the children of Israel if they continued in idolatry.

The Fifth Time Period

This time period began on Mount Sinai in 1445 BC and ended on Calvary, 32 AD.

During this period God gave His “peculiar people”, His chosen nation, a binding set of laws which affected every aspect of their lives. We would estimate that over 100 million Jews were born during this period, and yet only one individual lived fully in accordance with the standard set by God. This man was the “last Adam”, the incarnate Son of God.

Ishmael, the son of Abraham (by Hagar) was circumcised. So too was Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, but neither were heirs to the covenant promise made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Therefore an additional new token was given to the Chosen people at Sinai. They would thereafter express, in perpetuity, their living relationship with the LORD through a respectful and joyful celebration of the Sabbath. When they later sank into paganism and disobedience, the LORD cited several times, as proof of their infidelity and apostasy, their failure to observe the Sabbath. The profanation of the Sabbath was given particular attention in the book of Nehemiah.

If God had not given the Law, mankind could not have seen and understood the objective perfection of the Lamb. It was only through his sinless perfection that the sacrifice he made was fully acceptable to God.



Mount Sinai

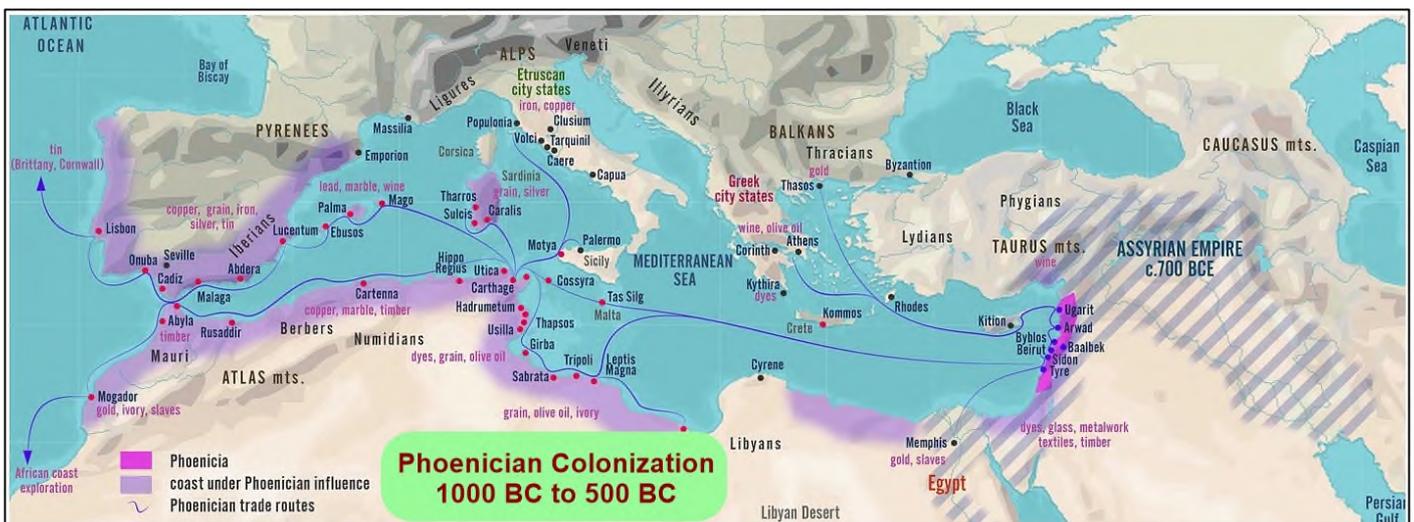
The Law also enabled the Chosen people to savor to the full their own wretched spiritual condition. The sinfulness of sin and man’s alarming inability to deal with it became more apparent than ever.

It is significant that during this period Israel became the only nation on earth to understand the meaning of repentance. Their complex system of sacrificial offerings in their varied forms impressed upon them, day after day, the horror of sin and the urgent need for atonement.

Through the Law and the Prophets the Chosen people began to realize, albeit very slowly, that the blood of sacrificed animals was not, in itself, a perfect atonement for sin. However, it would seem that at no time during this period did they realize that God Himself would provide a sacrifice that *would* be acceptable.

The Jews – on behalf of mankind as a whole – went through an astounding learning curve during this period. God had actually made His awesome glory manifest to them on Mount Sinai. They had even heard His voice! No nation had ever come remotely close to anything like this, or even imagined that such an epiphany might be possible.

Through the extensive trade which Israel conducted with the nations around her, news of her exceptional standing before God would have travelled far and wide in the millennium before Christ. Her neighbors, the Phoenicians, who had trading outposts all over the known world, would also have taken reports of her history and her prophets to the most distant lands. All nations would have heard of the God of Israel and learned through these reports that He claimed to be higher and more powerful than all the gods.



The Sixth Time Period

This time period is usually known as the Church Age, which commenced on Pentecost 32 AD and will continue to the hour of the Rapture.

The covenant made by God in this time period is no longer with a chosen nation but with individuals called from all nations. Everything that God had planned for the nation of Israel has been put on hold during this period. She is no longer God's witness on earth. Her place, as a witness, has been taken temporarily by the Church. God will only reappoint Israel as His witness when the Church is taken up in the Rapture.

Each of the time periods we are considering contain elements that were unique to that period. The sixth too is unique, revealing the continuous presence on earth of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. Jesus opened a door on Calvary so that the Holy Spirit could come down at Pentecost and dwell among men. His living habitation is the collective body of all who believe in Jesus and what he accomplished through his life, death and resurrection.

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in each believer is unique to this age. Not one person, prior to Pentecost, received this gift. While they were filled with the Holy Spirit, great servants of God such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Daniel and John the Baptist were not indwelt by the Third Person. Perhaps this is what Jesus was referring to when he said:

“Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” (Matthew 11:11)

The church is such an extraordinary creation that its future arrival was never foretold by the Prophets during periods 2-5. Even after it was revealed doctrinally by the Apostle Paul, many believers, including church leaders, had great difficulty accepting that the LORD had brought such a glorious entity into existence.

Jewish believers, in particular, struggled intensely with the whole idea that God would do such a thing without telling them in advance. After all, He had said, **“Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.” (Amos 3:7)**. Apparently they assumed that this referred to all that He did, and not simply to advance warnings of judgments that He intended to impose. These would allow anyone facing judgment to heed the warning and repent. Jewish believers also paid little attention to the passages in Scripture which said that God would call the Gentiles into His fold, just as He had called the Jews.



**The prophet Amos guiding his flock
(14th century manuscript)**

- the contrast

This time period is filled with hope for all who love God and believe in His Son, but it is awash with apprehension for those who continue to refuse the gift of salvation. None of the nine time periods comprise the startling contrast that we see here, between the invisible beauty of the Bride awaiting her Beloved and the spiritual decay of a world that continues to reject the grace and mercy of Christ.

We have not given handy labels to each of these time periods because neat descriptions can sometimes be misleading. For example, the Church age is often called the age of grace, but this gives the impression that grace was not poured out in Old Testament times. For example, as Jesus noted, grace and mercy brought healing to Naaman, a Syrian general, and a miraculous supply of food to a poor widow living outside the border of Israel. In both cases their faith made this possible. Psalm 136 tells us over and over that **“His mercy endureth forever.”** It was through His grace and mercy that Israel was created in the first place! When God put the rainbow in the sky after the Flood He was telling the whole world that, while He was obliged to administer judgment when rebellious men mulishly refused to repent, He was in essence a God of mercy.



[Credit: Mark Chambers]

The Seventh Time Period

This next time period will begin soon after Christ returns for his Bride. After the Church has left the earth, the restraining power of the Holy Spirit will cease temporarily:

**“And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man...”
(Genesis 6:3)**

During a period of seven years the world will see the solemn judgment of rebellious Israel and the wholesale destruction of the Children of Wickedness. This period of intense suffering and upheaval will culminate in the return of Christ to the earth and his annihilation of the Antichrist and his armies.



Scene from *Metropolis* by Fritz Lang, 1929

In our examination of time periods 2-6 we have not had an opportunity to explore the role played by Satan, his demon hoard or his earthly servants in the corruption of mankind. It should be apparent, however, that as God revealed more and more of His plan to mankind, the Enemy was obliged to modify his strategy and secure greater control over human knowledge and technology. This is why today, in the sixth time period, we are witnessing the extensive use of both to impose a Satanic world tyranny. The seventh time period will see a flowering of these devices and the emergence of a highly sophisticated methodology for deceiving, disabling, and enslaving mankind.

The Eighth Time Period

This period will last a thousand years! Christ will reign on earth as its sovereign king, requiring complete obedience to God's law. All who oppose him or breach any of his decrees will be immediately held to account. For all who obey the will of God, this period will be one of exceptional joy and spiritual fulfilment.

Satan and his demon hoard will be imprisoned during this period. Thus the holy angels may be given a reward at its commencement and allowed to rest. Their role thereafter in relation to mankind may be of a more personal nature:

“For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.”

(Psalm 91:11-12)

The nation of Israel, the righteous remnant who accepted Christ as their Messiah, will live in the land of Israel, whose borders may be enlarged. They will resume their role as priests of the Most High and will preach the righteousness of Christ to the ends of the earth, bringing all nations into joyful union with Christ and perfect submission to his holy will:

**“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the
glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”
(Habakkuk 2:14)**

The church, the Bride of Christ, will accompany him wherever he goes.



[Credit: fourteenfoottiger]

The ‘Ninth’ Time Period

It is probably incorrect to call this a “time period” since time itself will disappear into Eternity. Our Heavenly Father will send to earth the New Jerusalem which seemingly will serve as a living bridge between heaven and earth throughout eternity. The whole of Creation will be reconstituted and sin, death and hell will be no more.

What can possibly be said about this glorious fulfilment of God’s holy will through the grace and mercy of His Son, Jesus Christ? Were it not for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in each believer, we would have not the slightest inkling of what lies ahead for us in Eternity.

CONCLUSION

It can help us greatly to sit back occasionally and take a fresh look at the nine ages or time periods in God’s plan for mankind. Our chief aim in this paper is to draw attention to the substantial number of professing Christians who dismiss this account as “dispensationalism” and insist that God, Who never changes, cannot possibly have dealt with mankind in different ways over the course of history.

We give here in summary form the main criticisms of our dispensational position:

Dispensationalism introduces an artificial and unnecessary division in Scripture, leading to a fragmented understanding of God's plan.

Dispensationalism tends to over-emphasize End Times scenarios, distracting believers from their responsibilities in the present age.

The focus on a future earthly kingdom and a distinction between Israel and the Church can lead to a neglect of the spiritual and universal aspects of God's kingdom.

Dispensationalism's literal interpretation of prophecy can result in simplistic, even sensational, interpretations of Scripture, distracting believers from pursuing a more nuanced understanding of Biblical texts.

None of these criticisms are scripturally valid. We could wade into the complex depths of Covenant Theology and discuss the various ways it differs from Dispensationalism, but there is no need. If the straightforward plan of Redemption, as set out in this paper, is unacceptable to the reader, it is doubtful whether there is anything we could say to persuade him otherwise.

An interpretative framework, such as Covenant Theology, is bound by rules of its own. Dispensationalism, however, is not an interpretative framework – as its critics contend – but a matter-of-fact examination of what God actually said about the work He undertook, and will continue to undertake, with mankind. Either we take it literally or we don't.

Never in the history of the Church have believers been more dependent on a literal understanding of what God has said. As the End Time draws closer and the Enemy intensifies his efforts to confuse and mislead mankind, we need more than ever to lean on His Word. Jesus will not hold us to account on the day of judgment for any sincere failure on our part to grasp the meaning of His Word, but he will undoubtedly ask why we clung stubbornly to beliefs which depended largely on human argument:

**“Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD;
and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?”
– Jeremiah 23:29**

If you are troubled by a rock in your path, hit it hard with the Word of God and see what happens.

Maranatha.

**Jeremy James
Ireland
July 10, 2023**

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