

8

The Millennium & The New Heaven and New Earth

Armageddon and Christ's return

Israel calls out to her Messiah as the mighty armies of the earth surround her. Her very survival is at stake. Israel finally realizes the rejected Messiah of Isaiah 53 and Daniel 9:26, Christ Jesus, is their only hope as the nations of the world gather against her. Israel now calls out to Jesus Christ with a heart of supplication and repentance, acknowledges its errors in their rejection. Jesus warned Israel in Matthew 23:39, that they would not see Him until they acknowledged Him as their Messiah.

Jesus the rejected Messiah returns with saints and angels

Zechariah describes this end time battle 500 years before the birth of Christ, as armies of the nations literally melt at Christ's return. The carnage will be so great that blood will flow in a stream 180 miles long (Rev.14:20). So great will be the slaughter in the war of Armageddon that an angel will summon vultures and other birds to feast on the rotting corpses of humanity killed at Christ's return (Rev. 19:17-18).

Christ takes the Antichrist and false Prophet and throws them into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20). They become its first occupants, and the rest of the lost (unbelievers) will join them following the Great White Throne Judgment which takes place at the close of the Millennium (Rev. 20:10-15). Satan is bound for 1000 years during the Millennium, unable to tempt the nations (Rev. 20:3).

Saints rule and reign with Christ in the Millennium

Christ establishes His throne on earth with His saints; Christ's body of believers (1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thess. 3:13; Jude 3). The angels will at this time gather the survivors on earth before Christ's throne. Those who survived the Tribulation must stand before the throne of Christ. Angels gather all individuals that survived the Millennium, both the saved and unsaved to stand before Christ's throne. Jesus describes the event in terms of a Shepherd dividing the sheep and the goats. The goats are the lost (unbelievers), who survived the tribulation, the sheep are the saved believers who also survived (Zechariah 12:9-10).

Those on the left (the goats), those who rejected Christ in the Tribulation will enter Hell that was prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). Those on the right of Christ (His sheep), including the Israelis who escaped into the wilderness following the "Abomination of Desolation," will enter the Millennium.

According to the Lord's prayer – His kingdom will come

"Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Countless times every day for almost 2000 years, millions of people around the globe have voiced this prayer modelling the one Jesus gave to His disciples in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4. What are we asking for with these words? We are requesting that the long awaited earthly kingdom would be established.

In this model prayer to the disciples Jesus closes the prayer with these words: *"... Deliver us from the evil one (Luke 11:4)."* In the beginning, the garden of Eden was the kingdom of God on earth. But Satan took over that kingdom through the default of Adam. So in this prayer Jesus taught His disciples, which includes us, to pray for the reestablishment of the kingdom of God on earth. For the world again to be under God's reign, establishing His will here on earth *"as it is in heaven."* We will not see the ultimate fulfilment of this prayer of Jesus until the Millennium when Christ reigns in power and glory (see Psalms 2:6-12; Isaiah 11:4-9; Jeremiah 23:3-6; Zachariah 14:1-9). Only then will God rule and reign over every dimension of existence. Sin's power will be mitigated and Satan will be incarcerated in hell. Not until then will we

be finally delivered from the power and even the presence of the evil one.

An earthly kingdom is coming, and the King's name is Jesus. The Bible does not merely hint at this coming event; it is a major theme. Dwight Pentecost, who has devoted his entire life to the study of prophecy, writes: "A larger body of prophetic Scripture is devoted to the subject of the Millennium, developing its character and conditions, than any other subject. This millennial age, in which the purposes of God are fully realized on earth, demands considerable attention. This coming *Golden Age* is referred to variously as *"times of refreshing (Acts 3:19);"* *"times of restoration (Acts 3:21);"* *"the Day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6);"* and *"the fullness of the times (Ephesians 1:10)"* but it is best known as the Millennium; Christ Jesus' rule on earth for a period of 1000 years.

Another wonderful aspect of the kingdom is that we believers (saints) will participate in this future rule of the earth with Christ Jesus. Jesus said, *"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:32)."* The apostle Paul echoed this idea in three passages: *"Do you not know that the saints (believers) will judge the world?... Do you not know that we shall judge angels (1 Cor. 6:2-3)?"* *"If we endure, we shall also reign with Christ (2 Tim. 2:12)."* Our reward for faithfulness during this life will be a greater opportunity to serve in the earthly kingdom of Jesus Christ.

This coming *"Golden Age"* will validate the prophets predictions. Most of the biblical information concerning the Millennium comes to us through the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel, Amos, Micah, and Zechariah. As they speak of Christ's coming kingdom, they foresee a time when *"all kings shall fall down before Him (Christ); all nations shall serve Him (Psalm 72:11);"* and *"His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth (Zechariah 9:10)."* The predictions of these prophecies have not been realized at any time in the world's history. Only in the Millennium will they find their ultimate fulfilment.

In considering how these prophecies will be fulfilled, it is important to understand that the political, economic, and religious structure that we know today will be totally altered when Christ Jesus reigns on earth. No longer will any city like Washington DC, New York, London,

Berlin or Beijing be the political centre. The focus of all life will be Jerusalem in the land of Israel. Every important news release will go forth from Jerusalem. Jerusalem will be the seat of the new global government and it is from that city King Jesus will reign. In that day Jerusalem will regain the glory it displayed in the days of King David, but magnified. It will be the seat of power and authority for 1000 years until the arrival of the New Jerusalem, which will come down from heaven as promised in Revelation 3:12 and 21:2.

Look, there are scores of biblical passages proclaiming the reality of the Millennial kingdom. The Millennial kingdom is but one segment of God's prophetic plan. It will follow a time of great tragedy and horror (the Tribulation). It will be the transition era between this present world and the eternal state. It is "the consummating link between history and the eternal order." It is the beginning of the eternal rule of God in the kingdom, which will pass into the eternal state – a new heaven and a new earth.

Scripture gives us descriptive glimpses but does not answer all our questions. We know many things with certainty, though we do not know them completely. One thing I can say with certainty is that, ***"His kingdom will come and His will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven."*** Jesus emphasized, that we should pray for the day when our Saviour-God, the Lord Jesus Christ, will set up His kingdom on earth and reign in righteousness. It expresses a longing to see His will acknowledged throughout the world. The prayer is that these conditions might exist on earth as they do in heaven.

Let me ask you a question: Have you ever prayed this prayer? Now I want to ask you another question: Has God's kingdom come? Not yet. Is His will being done on earth as it is in heaven? Not yet. Will God's kingdom come? Will things be done on earth as it is in heaven? Absolutely! You can count on it; God keeps His word. One of these days you will see the answer to that prayer, because His kingdom will come, and the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord, Christ Jesus.

From the very beginning of human history, our world has known conflict and wars and there has not been an extended period of true peace at any one time over the globe. Man, with his fallen (sin) nature, is simply not capable of bringing true and lasting peace to this world.

Only when the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, comes to the world and sets up His kingdom will there be real harmony and peace. He is the only one who has the power and the ability to enforce the peace, righteousness, and abundance that will mark the 1000 year earthly utopia known as the Millennial kingdom. In addition, this kingdom marks the transition between history and eternity.

Millennial Kingdom

Throughout its history, the world has known many kingdoms, dynasties, and empires. They have risen and fallen, blowing across the pages of history like leaves on an autumn day. Some have been spectacular and adorned with splendor, others have enslaved and slaughtered their populations. Regardless of how we remember them, they all share the same common denominator – human leaders. Even in our own day, many think that if we could just get the right people into political office, then humanity would be free to reach its full potential.

There are many views of history and its relation to the future. Some people see it as cynical, others look back wishfully to a "golden age." Some say it is progressing to "laws of nature," others say it is digressing by those same laws. To all of this, the Bible gives a clear and certain answer to the questions of the future. History and human events are going somewhere and there will be a glorious future kingdom. The Lord's prayer to His apostles and to believers everywhere will be answered in God Himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, the second member of the Trinity, who will reign and rule on earth for 1000 years in the Millennium.

Human history is sandwiched between two paradises. The first paradise began in the garden of Eden, but the disobedience of Adam and his fall into sin brought the pain and sorrow of God's curse. Humanity was given the mandate of developing the Garden into the City of God. Instead of the New Jerusalem, the result was Babylon and the kingdom of man. With Christ's intervention into history (first in humility, next in glory), humankind will yet return to Paradise; this time in a city called the "New Jerusalem." Before that happens the human race will experience for the first time what it means to live under the rule and reign of God Himself; Christ Jesus.

History in our own day is moving towards the establishment of God's

victory and rule upon earth through Jesus Christ and His people. But what are the details? What does the Bible teach about the coming Millennium? Actually the Bible has a great deal to say about the subject. Let's examine its teachings together.

What is the Millennium?

The Millennium, in short is the 1000 year reign of Christ on the earth. If you look in an English translation of the Bible concordance for the word Millennium, you will probably be disappointed. There are many Bible passages that teach about the Millennium even though the word itself is not mentioned. The Millennium is about biblical doctrine and theological concept derived from many passages. In English theological terms, Millennium, is derived from Latin. It refers to the length of time that the Bible says the Messiah's kingdom will last upon earth before the end of history. In chapter 20, in the book of Revelation, the 1000 years is mentioned six times in the first seven verses. Speaking about the martyrs of the Tribulation: *"And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years (v.4)."* True believers shall be priests of God and of Christ: *"And shall reign with Him a thousand years (v.6)"*

Numerous Old Testament passages speak of a future time of true peace and prosperity for the righteous followers of God under the benevolent physical rule of Jesus Christ on earth. Zechariah 14:9 tells of this time, saying, *" And the Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day (Millennium) the Lord shall be acknowledged as the only true God."* The passage then continues in verses 16-21 to describe some of the millennial conditions. Even though the Bible speaks descriptively throughout about the Millennial kingdom, it was not until the final book, Revelation, that the length of His kingdom is revealed.

The prophet Isaiah, 2500 years ago, also foretold of this future era: *" Now it will come about in the last days, the mountain of the house of the Lord (Jerusalem) will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. And many people will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways, and that we may walk in His paths.' For the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, and will render*

decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war (Isa.2:2-4)."

Here Isaiah is telling us how he is looking forward to the glorious future kingdom of the Messiah. In that day Jerusalem will be established as the religious and political capital of the world. The Gentile nations will make pilgrimages to Zion (Jerusalem) for worship and for divine instruction. King Jesus will arbitrate international problems and settle disputes for the people. As a result, there will be universal disarmament. Justice and peace will ultimately be realized in the Millennial kingdom.

Several chapters later, Isaiah mentions some conditions of the Millennium: *"And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze; their young will lie down together; and the lion will eat straw like the ox. And the nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand in the viper's den (Isaiah 11:6-9)."*

Here Isaiah describes what it will be like in this future kingdom of the Messiah. Here Isaiah tells us that even wild animals will submit to Christ's rule, making it possible for a nursing child to play by the cobra's hole. The predatory instincts and carnivorous appetites will cease in animals. One of the most glorious promises in all of Holy Scripture is the second half of verse 9, giving the reason for the ideal conditions during the Millennial kingdom. *"They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."* In summary; the character and nature of the planet, including its occupants and even the animal creation will revert to their position as before the "fall of man." Paradise is restored as it was in Adam's day.

Other extensive Old Testament passages include: Psalms 2:6-9; Isaiah 65:18-23; Jeremiah 31:12-14, 31-37; I Ezekiel 34:25-29; 37:1-13, 40-48; Daniel 2:35; 7:13-14; Joel 2:21; Amos 9:13-14; Micah 4:1-7; and Zephaniah 3:9-20. These verses are only a few of the scores of prophetic passages found regarding this subject before the First Coming of Christ. Actually, the whole block of Old Testament

prophecy points to the establishment of a kingdom of peace upon earth when the law will go forth from Mount Zion.

The New Testament also gives significant witness to this coming kingdom because continuity with the Old Testament vision of a future Millennial kingdom is maintained. It is the Millennial kingdom that Jesus spoke of during the Passover meal before being betrayed and crucified saying, *"But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom (Matthew 26:27-29)."* Let me explain: Christ reminds His disciples that He would not drink from the fruit of the vine with them again until He returned to earth to reign. Then the wine would have a new significance; it would speak of the joy and blessedness of His Father's kingdom.

The future kingdom of God will have two distinct phases, the Millennium and the Eternal State. However, the overwhelming emphasis of the Bible is upon the 1000 year reign of Christ in His future kingdom known as the Millennium. The Millennium is a biblical reality that is yet to be realized.

What is its purpose?

God keeps His word. God made very specific promises to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Millennium will bring about the complete fulfilment of God's biblical covenants with Israel. The Millennium and Millennial kingdom are more than the rule of God in the hearts of men and women. They are also distinct from the eternal state.

An earthly kingdom with a physical presence and rule by the Messiah King is foretold throughout the pages of the Bible. This promise was not fulfilled in Christ's first coming because, though offered, the kingdom was rejected by the ruling leaders of Israel.

The Millennium is a transitional period in God's program. It is the beginning of the eternal rule of God in the kingdom which will pass into the eternal state. It is "the consummating link between history and the eternal order." History and current events are moving toward a final era that will be the pinnacle of God's plan.

In the Millennium Satan will be bound and the church and the nations (Gentiles) will be present and active, but the focus of prophetic revelation is on *Israel* and *Christ*. Israel's prominence is required in order to facilitate a literal fulfilment of her many Old Testament promises by the Lord. All of the redeemed of God will participate in the worship, blessings, and glories of the Millennial kingdom as they prepare for life and the eternal state.

The Millennium is the precursor of the Eternal State. It will be different than life as we know it today, but will still fall short of the absolute perfection of the Eternal State. We read in Revelation 21 and 22 that the Eternal State will entail passing away of the old order and the creation of the New Jerusalem and new heaven and earth.

When comparing the two periods of time we observe the following contrasts: The Millennium is associated with the continuum of human history, while Eternal State is not. The Millennium is the apex of human history, because sin is still present though restrained through Christ's rule, while heaven in the Eternal State is totally void of all sin. The Millennium will be a time in which resurrected believers and non-resurrected humans will routinely come in history, while the Eternal State will consist of only resurrected people (believers). The Millennium will still be a time in history when humans come into existence and will trust or reject Christ as their Saviour, while the Eternal State will be a time in which no one else will ever be added to the human race and everyone's destiny will be frozen, locked into saved or lost for eternity.

How does Israel relate to the Millennium?

The Millennium is the occasion for the final physical and spiritual restoration of Israel. This restoration is described in Ezekiel 37 and is summarized in verses 21 and 22. The rule of Christ will be worldwide and encompass all nations. However, the primary focus of the Millennial kingdom will be on the Jews; God's chosen people. The primary purpose of the Millennium is the restoration of Israel and Christ's rule over them, although the Church of the Bride of Christ is not absent from millennial activities.

Promises for Israel which will be fulfilled at the Second Coming of Christ: restoration to the land (v.21), unification of the two kingdoms

(v.22), purification from all idolatry (v.23), Messiah ruling over them (v.24), possession of the land forever (v.25), and the presence of God and His sanctuary in their midst (vv. 26-28). In short, Israel will be saved, cleansed, and restored.

How do I know that there's going to be a "Golden Age" for Israel? In the first chapter of the book of Acts, after Christ's resurrection, Luke says that Jesus spent 40 days teaching His disciples things pertaining to the kingdom of God (Acts ch.1). Then, as Christ was ready to ascend into heaven, the disciples asked, "*Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel (v.6)?*" The question indicates that Jesus taught them that a time would come when the kingdom would be restored to Israel. Jesus' response to the question indicated the same thing. He did not rebuke the question. Rather, He simply said to His apostles, "*It was not for you to know the times and the seasons when the kingdom would be restored to Israel (v.7).*" Some 30 years later, Jesus revealed to John in his writing of the book of Revelation; the seasons and the "signs of the times" of His return.

Changes on earth during the Millennium

As we alluded to earlier, the nature of man and animals will be changed during the reign of Christ Jesus. Satan will no longer be able to cause havoc on the earth. The curse of Adam's fall is removed from the earth, transforming animal life from predator to friend. In Romans 8:19-21, we read that all nature groans and waits for the adoption of the children of God. The earth will be like it was in the days of Adam and Eve before the fall. For details please read Isaiah 11:6-9, which describes some of the conditions on earth during the Millennium.

Government during the Millennium

Human government will be replaced by God. Mankind has had thousands of years to experiment with governments, administrations and lifestyles, so why have we been unable to solve our problems? Under human rule, the world has never seen a time that was free of war, strife, turmoil, and suffering. The governments of mankind, with their inherent inability to solve human problems that are rooted in humanity's inability to choose the right way to live will be replaced by a form of government that can at least solve those problems. During

the Golden Age, the Millennium, Christ Himself will rule the nations of earth with a rod of iron (Psalm 2:1-9).

The Government of the earth will not be a democracy, but a theocracy. Jesus, the Son of God, will rule from Jerusalem over the earth. His servants will be His governors, mayors, judges and priests over the citizens of the earth. The body of Christ, the Church, will rule with Christ over the earth. During this period Christ's servants will be rewarded for a faithful life.

This reward of government is best illustrated in the parable of the Talents. The faithful servants are rewarded with the responsibility of the kingdom received by the Master. In Luke, in exchange for the 10 Minas the servant is given charge over 10 cities (Luke 19:16-17). The disciples we see in Matthew 19:28 rule over the tribes of Israel. Jesus said to them, "*... when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory (reigning on earth), you who have followed Me will also sit on 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel.*" Has this ever happened before in history? No. Will it happen in the Millennium? Yes.

Jerusalem will be the earth's capital

The capital city of the earth will be Jerusalem. From Jerusalem, the government will go forth throughout the earth. The nations come to Jerusalem to learn the ways of God. To worship before the King of the earth.

Jesus will rule from the throne of David over the nations of the earth. Jesus will have a visible and holy presence to the nations. His appearance will be one of splendor according to Ezekiel. King Messiah is called the Glory of the Lord in Ezekiel 43. Here we see Jesus, in His glory as God and King ruling from Jerusalem.

The Role of the Church

The Church, the body of Christ, will rule with Him during the Millennium. As the population of the earth grows, the earth will require administration. Throughout the earth, the saints will be placed in positions of authority to manage Christ's kingdom.

The Old Testament Saints will Rule with the Church

During the Millennium resurrected Old Testament saints such as Daniel, David and Job will be active participants in the Messiah's kingdom. David will have a roll in leadership. Daniel is told in the end of days that he will rise to his inheritance. Job looked forward to the day when he would see the Redeemer with his own eyes (Job 19:25).

Population explosion during the Millennium

In the Millennium, the earth's population will explode. Without war, disease, famine and death the earth will multiply with people. Today there are over 6 billion people living on earth. After the Tribulation more than half of the earth's population will have been killed. Those alive during the return of Christ will be judged. Those following Christ will enter the Millennial kingdom. Those believers who enter the Millennium will repopulate the earth.

The only cause for death during the Millennium will be for rebellion and apostasy, but even death at 100 years old will be like the death of an infant today. Infants born at the start of the Millennium will live to nearly 1000 years of age before the Millennium closes. But when death does come, the individual will have willingly and knowingly rebelled against Christ. How many will be alive at the end of the Millennium is total speculation. A guess of 10 times the current population of the earth would not seem outrageous.

Testing at the end of the Millennium – the final rebellion of sinners

Of this population, many will have never experienced the testing of Satan. They will have seen the glory of Christ and His earthly kingdom. There will be no lack of anything on the earth. However, the true hearts of those "kingdom children" born during the Millennium were never tested. God's existence will be obvious and open. However, humanity given the chance, will still rebel against God. Satan tested the angels, he tested mankind in our day and he will test those born in the Millennium when he is released for a brief period after the 1000 year reign of Christ Jesus. This will be the final test of mankind. At the conclusion of the Millennium, Satan deceives an innumerable number

of souls born during the Millennium who rebel against Christ's kingdom. Christ makes short order of this rebellion.

Revelation 20:7-8 says, *"Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from confinement, and will go out to deceive the nations... To gather them (that are hostile to Christ) together for battle against God."* Verse 9 tells us that after recruiting an army of ungodly rebels, the devil marches against Jerusalem, the beloved city. But fire comes down from God out of heaven and consumes the troops.

Let me explain: Only believers will enter the Millennium and many of these believers will have children. When they have children, many of those children will not repent and believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord as their believing parents had. God has millions of children, but He has no grandchildren. Just as it is today, because these believing parents have children doesn't mean their children will be believers in Christ. It will be no different in the Millennium.

The Great White Throne judgement

Following this final test will be the Great White Throne judgment. This test is not for saints (believers) but for lost souls (unbelievers) from Christ's first coming to the end of the Millennial period; some 3000 years. Anyone whose name is not found written in the Book of Life is cast into the lake of fire.

Throughout the ages people have gone to great lengths to deny that they will one day be judged by the Lord. Some individuals who shudder at the prospect of facing God and judgement go so far as to refuse to acknowledge His existence or their accountability to Him. Their disbelief will never negate the biblical truth that after death comes judgement: *"It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgement (Hebrews 19:27)."*

The Great White Throne judgement will take place at the end of the Millennial reign of Christ Jesus and is the final judgement for all people of all ages who rejected God during their time on earth. All those judged will be *"cast into the lake of fire to join Satan, Antichrist and the False Prophet. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev. 20:10,14)."*

It is very sobering to think that the consequences of rejecting Christ will last forever. Those who refuse Christ as their Saviour will experience eternal separation from God, eternal darkness, and eternal punishment. The torment described in the Bible is very real.

Results of final judgement

The following are the results of God's final judgement upon His creation:

- God accomplishes His plan – God's plan for time and eternity will be finally accomplished. All things that He planned and purposed for humanity on this earth are now completed.
- Justice is finally served – Every wrong will now be righted. The justice that did not take place here on earth will finally occur.
- Christ's ministry is complete – All things which He set out to do are now accomplished. When He came the first time, He completed the work that God the Father had given Him. There are still things that are to happen before this final judgement. All these are accomplished at the Great White Throne.
- The goal of history is met – Paradise lost in Genesis will be regained. Sin will be eradicated and righteousness will flourish. History will reach its goal.
- All humans are held responsible for their actions – Humans will be held responsible for the deeds committed in this life. Everyone will be fairly judged.

The final judgement will culminate God's plan for this earth. After this judgement eternity begins.

Eternal State – new heaven and new earth

There are some places on earth that are called paradise because of their exceptional beauty, their year-round pleasant weather and their unusual variety of recreational opportunities they offer where tourists look forward to visiting with great anticipation. There's one *paradise* that far exceeds any ever known by man, and that's our future home in heaven. We're given a brief but majestic glimpse into heaven in the final two chapters of the Bible; Revelation 21-22. And what we find there is so amazing that it's beyond comprehension. Please read these

last two chapters of the Bible.

Keep in mind that God planned this wonderful place for you and me even before He created the earth; see Ephesians 1:3-4. And the best part in all of this is that God will dwell with us. He will be in our midst. We will have direct fellowship with Him and walk in the light of His presence (Rev. 21:23). Bear in mind as you read Scripture that throughout the ages, God has unveiled His eternal plan in stages, and the end purpose of everything is for God to be glorified.

Even before Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, God already had a plan for man's redemption from sin. He already knew what Jesus would need to accomplish on the cross. And best of all, He already had a wonderful future planned for those who receive Christ as their Saviour; a future that is eternal! If you have trusted Christ as your Saviour, you will go to heaven to enjoy everlasting blessings. But if you have not accepted His sacrifice for your sins, then you will be judged according to your works, and be sent to eternal condemnation in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15).

If you have not yet trusted Jesus to forgive your sins and provide you with eternal life but you believe in your heart and want to make this commitment; then I invite you to express your trust in Him right now with the following prayer:

" Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank you for dying on Calvary's cross for the forgiveness of my sins and for offering me Your righteousness and Your resurrected life. I now accept by faith Your gift of salvation and I ask You to come into my heart and be my Lord and Saviour and my very best friend. Through Your Holy Spirit, teach me about Your love and grace and about the new life that You have given me. Please begin the work of making me into the person you want me to be. Amen. "

These words will not save you, there is nothing magical in them; anyone can repeat a sentence. Only God knows your heart and your commitment. It is when you believe with your heart and put your faith in Christ Jesus; that's what saves you. There is no magic formula in what to say or how to say it but it's your attitude and your expression of your heart that really counts. If you truly believe in your heart and you prayed this prayer, the Spirit of God has come to dwell within you

forever and you have begun the great adventure for which you were created as a child of God. You can rest assured that God has forgiven you and received you into His family of believers. Now you and I are brothers or sisters in Christ. Welcome to God's family. Welcome to Christ's body of believers.

The true church of Jesus Christ is not composed of programs or buildings made with the hands of men, but of Christ Himself within the heart of every true believer. Remember, only God can forgive. You don't need any institution or priest to meditate between God and you, as it is written: ***"There is only one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5)."*** *Jesus is God who made the world and everything in it (John 1:3). "Since He is Lord of heaven and earth, He doesn't live in man-made temples (Acts 17:24.)"*

The Kingdom of God is inside you and not in buildings of wood and stone. The moment you accept Christ Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, the Spirit of God comes to dwell in you, just as He did in Adam and Eve before their fall from grace. *"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24)."* There must be no sham or hypocrisy. There must be no pretense of being religious, when inwardly one's life is corrupt. God insists that man approach Him with a broken and a contrite heart. Religion is a waste of time. Your priest or your church can't save you; only Christ Jesus can. It's not about buildings, rules, priests, confession booths, ceremonies or traditions. It's all about a relationship and not a religion.

God views your relationship with Him as permanent. Referring to all those who believe in Him, Jesus said, *"I know them, and they follow Me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one snatch them out of My Hand (John 10:27-29."* This means life that will last forever, being with God forever. It is not life that is conditional on your behaviour; what you may or may not do. It is eternal, and that means everlasting. He assures us that you cannot lose your salvation because you're in His hands. If Jesus said He will never leave us, how are you going to leave Him? Think ! Let us give thanks to our heavenly Father for His only begotten Son, Christ Jesus, who left His Royal robes of heaven, to come down to earth to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins and to offer us hope, salvation, reconciliation and life eternal.

Don't miss this great offer of eternal life. After all, that's why Jesus came to earth. He Himself said, *"I came that they may have life, and have it more abundantly (John 10:10)."* Also keep in mind that God *"is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9)."*

Are there other roads leading to heaven?

Many various religions, denominations and individuals would have us believe that Christ is but one way among many, all of which reach the same goal. God tells us differently: ***"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12)."*** As you can see, God makes available no other way; past, present, or future.

How is Christ the Way? The Scriptures teach that all men are sinners. Romans 6:23 reads, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* That verse teaches us that without Christ, we are going to die and spend an eternity in hell as payment for our sins. The second thing this verse teaches us is that eternal life is available through Jesus Christ. We can only pay the price of sin on our own by being punished and placed in hell for all eternity. But God's Son, Jesus Christ, came to earth to pay for the price of our sins. Because He did this for us, we now have the opportunity to not only have our sins forgiven, but to spend eternity with Him. In order to do this we must place our faith in what Christ did on the cross. We cannot save ourselves; we need a substitute to take our place. The death of Christ Jesus is the substitutionary atonement. He substituted Himself for us and took what we rightly deserved. *"God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21)."* On the cross Jesus exchanged our sin for His perfect righteousness so that we can one day stand before God and He will not see our sin, but the holy righteousness of Christ Jesus. You see, He died in the place of each one of us and by means of that death has provided us with the only means of access to God. The plan of salvation has been provided by God but the responsibility of either accepting or rejecting God's plan of salvation lies with each individual. Man must come to God according to God's terms.

Jesus said, ***"I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father except through Me (John 14:6)."*** The above verse clearly tells

us that the Lord Jesus Christ is Himself the only way to heaven. He does not merely show the way; He is the *Way*. Salvation is in a Person, not in a religion. Accept that Person as your own, and you have salvation. The Lord Jesus is not just one of many ways. He is the *only* way. The way to God and salvation is not by the Ten Commandments (law), trying to be good, the golden rule, sacraments, ordinances, baptism, confirmation, mass, church membership or religious worship; it is through Christ and Christ alone.

Today, many say that it does not matter what you believe as long as you are sincere and try to be good. They say that all religions have some good in them and that they all lead to heaven. But Jesus said, *"No one comes to the Father except through Me."* Can it be any clearer than that? You want to know how to get to heaven; well here is God telling you how. He created you. He should know how you can get to heaven. Do you think you know more than He does? Do you think your church or religion has a better way and knows more than God?

You're not saved by being in a religion. The only way that a person is saved is being in Christ Jesus. Jesus didn't come to earth to form a religion or a religious following. He came to form a relationship with us, to reconcile us to God and you and I enter into a relationship with one Man and this is Christ Jesus. *"There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby you must be saved."*

And yet you'll get someone who will ask, "How can I prove to someone that Christianity is the only true religion?" Look, quit trying to prove it because Christianity doesn't save anybody. You're not saved by Christianity. Christianity didn't die on the cross for you. Christianity was not raised from the dead for you. Today, Christianity is not sitting at the right hand of the Father for you. Christianity is a religion. And as far as a religion is concerned; Christianity isn't any better than any other religion *unless* what you call Christianity is a proclamation of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are in Christ Jesus and the Spirit of God is in you, then you're okay – you are a child of God.

Can you see what I'm getting at? There is no church that died on the cross for you and me. There is no church that can save you. There is no church that was raised from the dead, only a Man called Jesus; God Himself in the flesh. So, no man will ever be saved by joining a

church, or a religion including the Christian religion. Simply, you will never get to heaven by being in a religion – any religion.

Need more assurance and clarification? Jesus said, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him (God) who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgement, but has passed from death into life (John 5:25)."* Let me explain: When you accept Christ Jesus and ask Him to come into your heart to be your Lord and Saviour you go from being spiritually dead (separated from God) to becoming spiritually alive (indwelt by God's spirit) and the start of a personal, love relationship with God for all eternity. There is no religion to it at all; salvation is all about a personal relationship with God, just as Adam and Eve had, where God's spirit dwells within you.

Will you miss heaven by only 18 inches!

Is it all (being religious) just in your head but not in your heart? If all you have is head knowledge concerning Christ Jesus, then you are no closer to heaven than God's adversary Satan. It tells us in Scripture that Satan's demons also believe everything (about Jesus) and tremble and I can assure you that they're not going to heaven (James 2:19). It is interesting that in 2 Corinthians 4:4, it teaches that Satan blinds the *mind* of believers, but Romans 10:9-10 teaches that a person is saved when they believe from the *heart*. There is only 18 inches between the heart and the mind; for many it is the difference between heaven and hell.

The Final State and the destiny of mankind

When God created you with a body, soul and spirit, He made you in His image; a triune being just as God Himself is a triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). The real you (soul/spirit) could no longer cease to exist than God Himself could cease to exist. Spirit cannot die. When God created you, He created the real you with His spirit to live in you for all eternity. For all time, your soul/spirit will exist somewhere; either to be with God in heaven or separated from God in a place reserved for Satan. God clearly states in the book of Ecclesiastics that man's physical body returns to dust (earth) and the spirit will return to God who gave it; for judgement. *"Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it (12:7)."*

The bottom line is this: The true life of human beings is spiritual, and while the physical life ends, the spiritual life continues throughout eternity. It is perpetual. It is everlasting life. The Word of God assures us that all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will have everlasting life (John 3:16; 6:47). What about you? You are the "captain of your own ship" and the "master of your own destiny." You have a decision to make to either accept Jesus or reject Jesus.

You have a life to live, a death to die, a judgement to face, and an eternity to endure; either to be with God or be separated from God for all eternity. You will not miss hell and go to heaven unless you are twice born; once physically and once born again of the spirit of God. Jesus said, *"Most assuredly, I say to you unless one is born again (of the spirit), he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3)."* We receive the Spirit of God when we ask Christ Jesus to come into our hearts to be our Lord and Saviour. We become children of God when we are saved because we are adopted into God's family through our faith and relationship with Christ Jesus (Gal. 4:5-7; Eph. 1:5).

A Final Word

The exciting plan of the ages that I've outlined in this book is not some pipe dream. It is God's own plan, given through the holy men who served Him; the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New Testament. Bible prophecy is, as I stated earlier: history written in advance. Just as many prophecies of the past were fulfilled exactly as God predicted and right on time, so will the prophecies about the future and the end times come true. This includes His wonderful plan for you and me that will be fulfilled exactly as described in Scripture. In closing, I just want to tell you that it is such a joy to share and tell others of our wonderful Saviour.