

THE DIVINE PLAN OF THE AGES

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.” — 2 Peter 1:19

The Bible, the oldest book in existence, has outlived the storms of more than thirty centuries. The fact that this grand old book has survived so long, notwithstanding many unparalleled efforts to banish and destroy it, is strong evidence that the great Being whom it claims as its Author, has also been its preserver.

Although inspiring to faith, fully understanding the messages of this marvelous book has been difficult. A book which has sought to clarify the beauty and harmony of the Bible is *The Divine Plan of the Ages*. Since 1886, when it was first published, millions of copies have been placed in the hands of those searching for the correct understanding of God’s plan. Each of the fascinating subjects covered thoroughly in the Sixteen Chapters of this book are like keys which unlock the Bible’s treasures.



Chapter One: *Earth’s Night of Sin to Terminate in a Morning of Joy*

The title, *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, suggests an orderly progression in the Divine arrangement foreknown to God. Gradually, He has opened up His plan to reveal the exceeding riches of His grace provided through the gift of His Son.

Now, in this *time of the end*, much more light is due upon God’s merciful plan than at any previous time in the Church’s history.

For nearly six thousand years a dark night has been *permitted* to loom upon humanity—a lesson never to be forgotten. But soon the glorious day to be ushered in by Messiah, the *Sun of Righteousness*, shall arise and shine clearly upon all. This *morning of joy* shall bring healing and blessing, more than counter-balancing the dreadful night of weeping, sickness and death. Yes, *“Weeping may endure for a night...but joy cometh in the morning.”* Psalm 30:5



Chapter Two: *The Existence of a Supreme, Intelligent Creator Established*

The existence of an Intelligent Creator is a clearly demonstrated truth, the proof of which lies all around us and within us. We are his workmanship, whose every power of mind and body speaks of a marvelous skill beyond our comprehension. God is

also the Designer and Creator of nature—ordering and establishing its laws—the beauty and harmony of operation we witness daily. This One whose wisdom planned and whose power upholds and guides the universe is admired and adored, yet is so misunderstood by His creation. Every living creature, every plant and every flower speaks volumes of the wisdom and skill of an intelligent Creator. To study His Word is to study His merciful character.



Chapter Three: *The Bible as a Divine Revelation Viewed in the Light of Reason*

The Bible is the torch of civilization and liberty. Careful students of its pages are invariably elevated to a more noble life. All other books combined have failed to bring the joy, peace and blessing to the groaning creation that the Bible has brought to both

the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned. The depth, power, wisdom and scope of the Bible’s testimony convince us that not man, but Almighty God is the author of its plans and revelations.

One purpose and spirit pervades the entire Bible, from the creation and fall of man, to man’s recovery from that fall. Its intervening pages show the successive steps of the plan of God for the accomplishment of this purpose. Though its pages were written by many pens over thousands of years, the Bible is not merely a collection of moral precepts and wise maxims. It is much more: it is a reasonable and harmonious statement of the causes of present evil in the world, its only remedy and the glorious final results.



Chapter Four: *The Epochs & Dispensations Marked in the Development of the Divine Plan*

God’s original and unalterable plan has been progressing to completion through three great *epochs* or *worlds* portrayed in Scripture: *the world that was, the present evil world and the world to come wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

As some misjudge the skill and wisdom of a great architect and builder by his unfinished work, so also many misjudge God by His unfinished work. By and by, when the rough scaffolding of evil, which has been permitted for man’s discipline, and which shall finally be overruled for his good, has been removed and the rubbish cleared away, God’s *finished work* will universally declare His infinite wisdom and power. His plans will then be seen to have been in full harmony with His glorious, loving character.



Chapter Five: *“The Mystery Hid from Ages and Generations, but Now Made Manifest to His Saints”*

God has repeatedly expressed that His purpose has always been to restore and bless mankind through a deliverer—but who would be that deliverer remained a *mystery* for four thousand years. Then, the

promise given to Abraham that his *seed* should *bless all families of the earth* began to be fulfilled through the birth, death and

resurrection of Jesus Christ. This *hidden mystery* was described by the Apostle Paul as “*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*” (Colossians 1:27) In this time when God is *calling out a people for His name*, only a few understand this *mystery*, that Christ and his Church are the promised *seed*, in whom and by whom *all nations of the earth shall be blessed*. For now, *the whole creation groans in pain together, waiting for the completion of this mystery class—the manifestation of the Sons of God.* Genesis 22:18; Romans 8:19-22; Acts 15:14-17



Chapter Six: *Our Lord's Return—Its Object, the Restitution of All Things*

The true and faithful Church, a little flock, has been waiting eagerly throughout the Christian age for the promise given them by their master: “*If I go, I will come again.*” (John 14:3) The Apostle Peter encouraged the Church that God would “*send Jesus Christ... whom the heaven must retain until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.*” (Acts 3:20, 21) What joy to know that Jesus’ *return* means the *restitution of all things!* All that was lost when sin entered the world—life, health, happiness, freedom from fear and a loving relationship with God—will be restored to mankind. Then Christ and his Church will together say: “*Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*” Revelation 22:17



Chapter Seven: *The Permission of Evil and Its Relation to God's Plan*

God’s perfect law of the universe for all intelligent beings is summed up in one word—*love*. In His wisdom, God foreknew that *goodness and love* can best be appreciated by contrast with evil and selfishness. When God expelled disobedient Adam and Eve from His fellowship in the Garden of Eden, they began to learn the difference between good and evil. (Genesis 3:22) Thereafter, Adam’s descendants have been learning this lesson even more vividly, and they long for a better day. In due time, God’s great plan of education and redemption will convince mankind that happiness can only be achieved by obedience to God’s righteous laws. All the misery, pain and tragedy caused by evil will be more than offset by the wonderful blessings of the Kingdom. All will see God’s justice in condemning disobedience, and they will begin to see His immeasurable love in sending His Son to redeem the lost and dying race. Until then, with the eye of faith we look forward to the time when all mankind will be restored, as planned since the world began. Acts 3:18-21

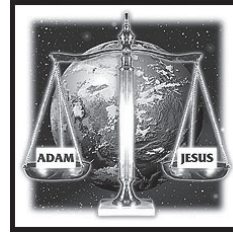


Chapter Eight: *The Day of Judgment*

“*God hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man who He hath ordained.*” (Acts 17:31) This spiritual *judge* is Christ. Associated with Christ in this work of judging will be his faithful *bride*—the Church. (1 Corinthians 6:2)

The term *judgment* (krisis, Greek) means a trial period with a verdict at its close. Although *day* can signify twenty-four hours, it often has a wider meaning—such as Noah’s *day*. The Apostle Peter identifies the *day of judgment* as a *thousand years*. (2 Peter 3:7, 8) It is the *day* in which Christ will reign and “*judge the world in righteousness.*” During that time period, all

humanity will be schooled in righteousness, and at the end they will be tested as to their obedience. “*When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.*” (Isaiah 26:9) With Jesus as the righteous *judge*, there is nothing to dread. He is the one who so loved and even died for us. 2 Corinthians 5:14,15



Chapter Nine: *Ransom and Restitution*

Woven throughout the Bible is the theme of *restitution* which occurs at Jesus’ second advent. (Acts 3:18-21) At the first advent, our Redeemer “*gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time.*” (1 Timothy 2:5,6) This *ransom* guarantees to *all* a future *trial* for life everlasting. All humanity, now under the “*bondage of corruption*” will be delivered from the original death penalty upon Adam and his race. (Romans 8:21) During his second advent, Jesus brings to all humanity this deliverance from the bondage of sin and death. The same unswerving justice that once condemned man to death now stands pledged for the rescue of all! The resurrection of the *just and the unjust* during the *times of restitution* will bring to mankind every blessing lost through Adam’s sin. God’s mercy and love will then amaze and delight an appreciative world.



Chapter 10: *Spiritual and Human Natures Separate and Distinct*

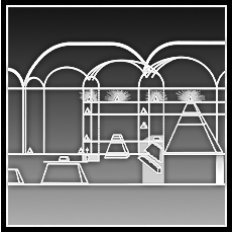
The Word of God has both *earthly and heavenly* promises. God’s wonderful plan is to restore mankind to the original human perfection lost by Adam through disobedience. An exception to this is the Christian Church, whom God changes from human to spiritual nature. The true Church is offered a spiritual nature, because they, having responded to the *high calling* of this *Gospel Age*, have covenanted to a life of sacrifice and have proven faithful *even unto death*. (2 Peter 1:4, Revelation 2:10) Those saved during the *Millennial Age*—which is most of the world—will be blessed with health, life and a perfect home here upon the earth. Both the human and spiritual natures will be glorious in their perfection, yet distinct and separate. The glory of God’s finished work will display the beautiful variety, yet wonderful harmony of all things animate and inanimate—harmony with each other and harmony with God.



Chapter Eleven: *The Three Ways—the Broad Way, the Narrow Way, the Highway*

Illustrated in God’s Word are three different paths which lead to three different destinies. Adam’s sin opened the *broad way* leading to death, and all mankind have been on this path for over 6,000 years. (Genesis 3:23, 24; Matthew 7:13,14) Nearly 4,000 years after sin entered the world, our Redeemer, at 30 years of age, began walking on the *narrow way which leads to life*. During the Gospel Age, many have been invited, but few have been willing to walk this *narrow way*—a way that is difficult but offers a glorious reward to those who faithfully overcome. The third *way* is styled a *highway* which, in the Messianic Age, will be relatively easy to walk up, as illness, deception from Satan, and ignorance will be removed. The goal of this highway is the reconciliation (*atonement*) between God and the ransomed world of mankind. These will learn righteousness that they might develop the mental and moral character-likeness of God. The teachers of righteousness at that time will be Christ with

his faithful little flock that were on the *narrow way*. They will assist all resurrected mankind with this merciful opportunity to gain life everlasting. “*And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those... No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast... but the redeemed shall walk there...*” Isaiah 26:9; 35:8,9



Chapter Twelve: *Explanation of the Chart Representing the Plan of the Ages*

This Chart is like a road map of the entire plan of God. Events and Bible characters are illustrated as they progress throughout history—from mankind’s condemnation to its restoration—as well as the exaltation of the elect Church. The Chart identifies three main

time divisions or *dispensations* which portray three separate *worlds* spoken of in Scripture, each administered by a different rulership.

The 1st Dispensation, from creation to the flood is the *world that was* under the supervision of the angels. (2 Peter 3:6) Because of the corruption of some of these angels, *the earth was filled with violence*, and this *world* was put to an end by the flood. Only faithful Noah, his family and animals of every kind survived. Genesis 6:1-22

The 2nd Dispensation, from the flood to the beginning of Christ’s Messianic reign at the second advent, has been the *present evil world*. (Galatians 1:4) This *world* has been under the power of the *prince of this world*—Satan. (John 12:31; 2 Corinthians 4:4) During this time mankind has been permitted to try self-government, but under the pervading influence of Satan it has proven useless.

The 3rd Dispensation begins with the thousand-year Messianic reign of Christ and continues throughout eternity. This dispensation starts with the destruction of the corrupt political, social, religious and financial systems, making way for the “*new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.*” (2 Peter 3:13) It is the time when Christ and the Church reign together—blessing *all the families of the earth* in the “*times of restitution . . . spoken by the mouth of all [God’s] holy prophets...*” Revelation 3:21; 22:17; Acts 3:19-21



Chapter Thirteen: *The Kingdoms of This World*

God’s *original* design was that every man would unselfishly care and work for the common good of all. God gave man dominion over earth with this directive: “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind*” and “*thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*” (Matthew 22:37-40) When Adam sinned, God’s Kingdom ceased immediately upon the earth. Since that time His Kingdom has not been re-established among humanity except in a brief, *typical* manner with ancient Israel.

Though mankind lost his dominion, God allowed him to exercise power according to his own ideas and choices “*until he [Christ] come whose right it is*” to reign. (Ezekiel 21:25-27) Daniel prophesied that the Gentiles would have domination over Israel until the time Messiah’s rule was to begin. These Gentile powers were illustrated in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a great image. (Daniel Chapter 2) The *head of gold*—Babylon; the *breast of silver*—Medo-Persia; the *belly and thighs of brass*—Greece; and the *legs of iron*—Rome. This last universal empire had feet divided into ten “*toes... part of iron, and part of clay.*” These *toes* represent the nations of Europe which grew out of the old Roman Empire. Pagan Rome became Papal Rome which set itself up as a counterfeit *Kingdom of God*, and reigned with

an iron hand throughout the centuries. The 5th and final universal empire—the *stone cut out of the mountain which smote the image*—will be the reign of Messiah, who, with his Church, will put down all sin and rebellion and will prepare mankind to be God’s representative ruler of earth again. 1 Corinthians 15:25



Chapter Fourteen: *The Kingdom of God*

The prominent theme of the Scriptures is the promise of the Kingdom of God under the reign of Messiah. The prophecies all point toward the exaltation of the nation of Israel with Messiah as their King—the hope and *expectation* of every faithful Israelite. (Luke 3:15) At first, Jesus’ disciples, in common with the entire Jewish nation, had an unclear concept of God’s Kingdom. They thought it was only an earthly Kingdom, just as many today err in the opposite direction, thinking it is only heavenly. But Jesus taught both. His faithful disciples will rule with him from heaven, and that rule will be extended over all the earth in due time. For this reason Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*” Matthew 6:10



Chapter Fifteen: *The Day of Jehovah*

This *day*, also called *the day of vengeance of our God*, is the period of time in which the kingdoms of this world pass away, and God’s Kingdom is gradually set up under Christ. During this time Satan’s power and influence decline, as truths of every kind lead to revolution—“*a great tribulation such as never was since there was a nation.*” (Isaiah 61:2; Psalm 110:5; Psalm 97:1-4; Matthew 24:21) Christ, as the *general of Jehovah* will be recognized by all as the *King of kings*, the *prince of peace* blessing the world. When Jesus finishes the complete object of his reign, “*then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him [the Father] that put all things under him.*” (1 Corinthians 15:28) God’s wrath, therefore, is not the result of divine malice—but rather correction and training in righteousness which will prove a remarkable blessing for all.



Chapter Sixteen: *Our Duty Toward the Truth: Its Cost, Its Value, Its Profit*

Understanding brings responsibility. The light of Truth received into a good and honest heart must be acted upon and nurtured. As faithful stewards, we must *lift up a standard* pointing to the wonderful outcome of God’s marvelous *plan of the ages*. We are instructed “*to give light to them that sit in darkness*” Matthew 5:13-16; Luke 1:79

We now see that His *divine plan* is harmonious, beyond human invention, and it reveals His wisdom, justice, love and power. False doctrines hide the truth and even cast a shadow over the character of God, but the Bible reveals His pure, loving character and life-giving plan for man. Through His Word we have learned that the darkness and suffering on this earth will soon be replaced with God’s glory and overflowing blessings. Mankind’s 6,000 years of experience with sin and suffering will prove to be a great advantage when, in the *thousand-year judgment day*, Christ and his faithful followers will administer the Kingdom. (1 Corinthians 6:2) On earth, the faithful who lived before Christ will be his human representatives. (Isaiah 1:26; Psalm 45:16) By this arrangement “*all the nations of the earth*” will be blessed, as God promised Abraham. Genesis 12:3; 22:18; Galatians 3:29

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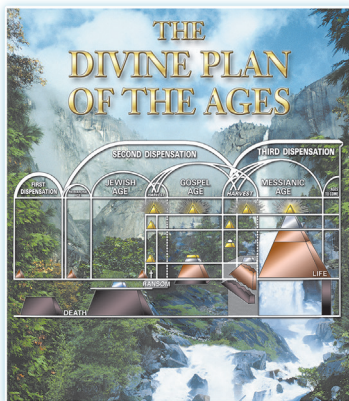
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The Divine Plan of the Ages



This Christian classic contains over 1,600 Old and New Testament Scriptures explained clearly and understandably. It provides a logical progression of the Scriptures, delineating God’s plan from paradise lost to paradise restored. It was the third best seller in the early 1900s—the Bible and the Chinese Almanac being first and second. Joseph Rotherham, who translated The Emphasized Bible, described the book as “...bold, broad, and breezy; very refreshing after the stereotyped dogmas and platitudes which pass current in the theological world.... The Chapter on ‘the Permission of Evil’ is alone more than worth the price of the whole volume...”

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