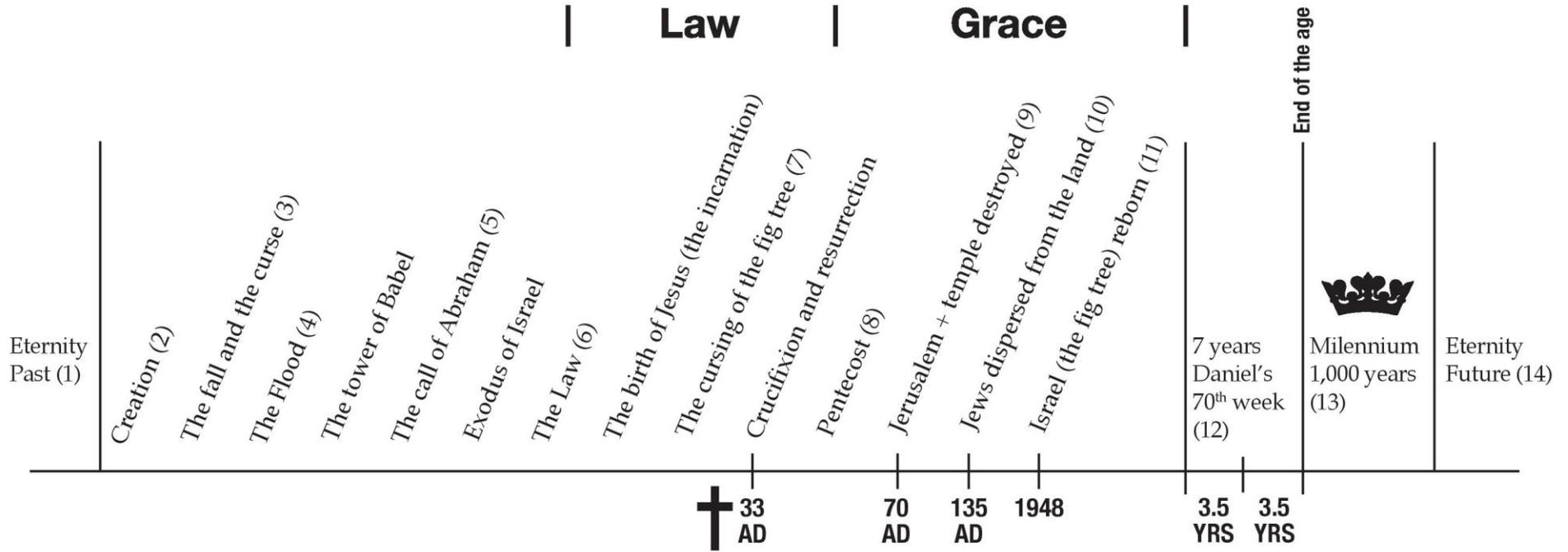


# GOD'S PLAN FOR HUMAN HISTORY AND THE AGES (EPH. 1:10-11)



- (1) In eternity past God chose certain persons, in harmony with His foreknowledge of them and their free wills, to be saved from the penalty of their sins and brought into holy fellowship with Him (Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:1-2).
- (2) Man was created in the image of God, meaning, like God, he is a rational, emotional and volitional being with a moral quality (Gen. 1:26). This design equips man for potential rich fellowship with God. Man was also made to have dominion over creation under God's supreme Headship (Gen. 1:26).
- (3) The fall of man through his disobedience brought in sin and death, with the entire creation being in bondage to corruption (Rom. 5:12; 8:20-21). At the fall, man lost fellowship with God and his right to rule over the earth. Satan usurped this rule (Jn. 16:11; 1 Jn. 5:19).
- (4) The flood was God's first universal judgment upon sinful mankind (Gen. 6:5-7).
- (5) After man failed again by building the tower of Babel, God selected Abraham to be the father of a people (the Jews) through whom God would fulfill His purposes: (a) to bring forth the promised redeemer (Gen. 3:15; Rom. 9:4-5); (b) to receive God's revelation, His Word (Rom. 3:2); (c) to be a blessing to all the families of the earth, especially through Abraham's descendant, Christ (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:6-9, 16, 29).
- (6) The Law was given to Israel. It reflected God's moral character. It proved the inability of sinful man to keep God's moral precepts and thus functioned to show man his sinfulness and his deserved condemnation from God (Rom. 3:9-20; 2 Cor. 3:6-9; Gal. 3:10-24). When Christ came, He put an end to the Law as a way of righteousness and of sanctification; thus the church functions under grace (Rom. 10:4; Gal. 2:16-3:5; 4:21-31; Rom. 6:14; 7:1-6).
- (7) In His final week of ministry before the cross, Jesus cursed a fig tree and it withered (Mk. 11:12-14, 20-21). The fig tree represents the nation of Israel (Hos. 9:10; Joel 1:7; Lk. 13:6-9). This action symbolized His judgment upon unbelieving Israel, which rejected Jesus as their Messiah (Matt. 21:33-44; 24:37-39).
- (8) At Pentecost Jesus baptized the church with the Holy Spirit, bringing Jews, and eventually Gentiles, into the body of Christ (Acts 2:1-4, 33; 10:34-48; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 3:1-6). Thus an era of grace was inaugurated (Rom. 3:24; 5:1-2; 6:14; Eph. 2:4-9).
- (9) Christ's judgment upon unbelieving Israel unfolded over time as a withering of the "fig tree." In 70 AD, Roman armies destroyed the temple, as prophesied by Jesus (Matt. 24:2) and much of the city was burned. Thousands of Jews were killed or taken captive.
- (10) When Israel once again tried to break free from the yoke of Rome in 134 AD by mounting a rebellion, the Romans cruelly assaulted the nation, killing at least 500,000 Jews. Jews fled the land or were killed or enslaved. By 135 AD, the "fig tree" was fully withered under Christ's judgment. There was no temple and no worship and the people had left the land.
- (11) Jesus used a parable to prophesy that the fig tree would again come to life, and this great sign would signal the nearness of Christ's return (Matt. 24:32-33). The nation was miraculously reborn in May, 1948 and many Jews have returned to the land, as prophesied in Ez. 36:24.
- (12) A final 7 year period will end this age, known as Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week of seven years (Dan. 9:24-27). This will be a period marked by wars, severe troubles and various judgments from God. The Antichrist ("the man of lawlessness") will make a covenant with the Jews for this period, but in the middle of the 7 years he will turn against them, stop the temple worship and desecrate the rebuilt temple, entering it and declaring himself to be God (Dan. 9:27; 2 Thess. 2:4). This act inaugurates the "great tribulation," which for the Jews is "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Matt. 24:21; Jer. 30:7). The Jews and believers in Christ are mercilessly persecuted by the Antichrist until Christ comes to slay him and bring salvation to the remnant of the Jews (2 Thess. 2:8; Zech. 12:10; Dan. 12:1; Rom. 11:25-27). During this period, or in close proximity to it, the Judgment Seat of Christ will be set up and all NT believers will appear there to be recompensed (positively or negatively) for their (post-conversion) works (2 Cor. 5:10). This judgment is not for eternal salvation, as that judgment has passed (Jn. 5:24). The surviving peoples from the nations are also judged, and those who enter the Kingdom will be subjects there (Matt. 25:31-46). The rapture question is complex and not easily discerned, thus causing controversy. Believers should note, however, that the only two passages that speak clearly of the possibility of escape from the end-time tribulation show that escape is possible, but definitely conditional (Lk. 21:34-36; Rev. 3:10).
- (13) This 1,000 year Kingdom sees Christ installed in glory on His throne in Jerusalem for 1,000 years (Matt. 19:28; Mic. 4:7; Rev. 20:4, 6). The earth will be greatly restored from the fall and Satan will be bound for 1,000 years (Acts 3:21; Rom. 8:21; Is. 11:6-9; Rev. 20:1-3). Some Kingdom blessings will be: health for the redeemed (Is. 33:24; 35:5-6); peace (Is. 2:4); righteousness and justice (Is. 11:4; 32:1); joy (Is. 14:7; 51:11); comfort (Is. 49:13); truth will prevail (Jer. 33:6; Zech. 8:3); material prosperity (Jer. 31:12); holiness (Is. 11:9); fullness of the Holy Spirit (Is. 44:3). God's unconditional covenants with the Jews (Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic and New covenants) will find fulfillment in this era (Rom. 11:1, 11, 25-29). Those believers who have lived faithful lives will be "overcomers" who will share this reign with Christ (Lk. 19:16-17; Rom. 8:17b, 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26-27). The five reward crowns reflect this reign (1 Cor. 9:25; 1 Thess. 2:19-20; Jas. 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:1-4; 2 Tim. 4:8). Of course, such overcomers do sin, but practice confession (1 Jn. 1:9). The overcomers' reward will also include a magnified enjoyment of Christ as eternal life (Lk. 18:30; Jn. 17:3; Rev. 2:7, 17; 3:4, 12). Thus, Gen. 1:26 will find fulfillment with man expressing God's life through fullness of fellowship with Him, and ruling with Him. Through Christ's judgment at His Judgment Seat non-overcoming believers will experience varying losses in this Kingdom era (Matt. 25:30; 1 Cor. 3:15; 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-5, etc.). Adults who enter the Kingdom without glorified bodies will give birth to children who will have sinful natures. Such offspring will have opportunity for salvation. Yet, even under the ideal conditions of Christ's reign, many people will finally rebel against God at the end of the Millennium when Satan is loosed, proving fallen man's sinfulness (Rev. 20:7-10).
- (14) Eternity future is described in Rev. 21-22. God's grace is assured for all born-again believers in eternity, and by grace, through simple faith in Christ alone, they will never perish (Jn. 3:16; 5:24; Rom. 8:29-30; Eph. 2:6-10).