

# God's Secret



## and the Crisis of the Cross

Steve Shober



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Stephen F. Shober



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# Dedication

To by beloved grandchildren:

Christian Gehrman  
Trinity Gehrman  
Aleah Graves

## Preface

A book about dinosaurs, black holes, and Bigfoot would be kid's stuff compared to the top secret God had hidden for millennia from the world. You can be sure, when God holds a secret, He has a specific reason to do so, and you can also be sure it dwarfs anything humans have done or even can imagine. This book will discuss God's secret and its implications for the entire world, for all times.

God's top secret (a mystery) is mentioned in one of the most enlightening, yet perplexing, passages in the Bible.

*But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. (1 Cor. 2:7-8)*

While mentioned in this passage, the exact truth of that mystery is unclear. However, the text indicates that the rulers at the time of Christ's death, who surely were led by the god of this age, Satan, would not have crucified Christ had they known something that God kept hidden from them. While a little hard to grasp at first, this passage is teaching there was a mystery (secret) hidden in the mind of God from the very beginning of time, a mystery related to Christ's death. God had to hide this mystery from everyone, including the angels in Heaven and Satan, because premature knowledge of it, by anyone, would have eventually leaked out and created a crisis related to the crucifixion, a crisis of unspeakable proportions. If Christ were not crucified, God's redemptive plans would have been in ruin and human history would have been altered forever. Thus, God kept a secret throughout human history to prevent *the crisis of the Cross*.

The crucifixion was an absolute necessity, the essential centerpiece of God's redemptive plan for humans. Redemption required that sin had to be forgiven by full payment of the debt it created. Animal sacrifices could not forgive sin because animal blood merely allowed sinners to have their sins atoned, covered up. In due time, Christ came to die and to fully, permanently, pay for the sins of humanity. His death allowed God to forgive everyone in the past whose sins were atoned, and all the sins of present and future believers. If Christ were not crucified, there would be no righteous solution to the sin problem, and every human who ever lived would remain dead in sin, condemned to Hell.

This purpose of this book is twofold:

1. To explore the mystery to show exactly what it is and how it changed the world, and
2. To examine why Satan would not have crucified Christ had he known of the mystery.

The wisdom contained in the mystery was obviously not in the Scripture available at the time of the crucifixion; if it had been, it would not have been hidden, and Satan certainly would have known. The hidden wisdom was revealed fully only when it was safe to do so, which was after the crucifixion, in the first century. Then, for the first time, the Apostle Paul could say, "... *we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery.*" The mystery introduced a whole new, non-prophesied age into

human history, the Age of Grace. Satan had no inkling that a new Age was in God's mind, especially one that would witness to the angels in Heaven and have a profound impact upon the future. Neither did anyone have a clue of the other marvels of that Age (the Age in which we live): Salvation by God's grace through faith, gentiles being blessed apart from the conversion of Israel, the secret coming of Christ to deliver His saints from the wrath to come, the formation of the Body of Christ, and so on. Is it possible that the very things God is doing in our Age are the things that would have caused Satan to change his mind about the crucifixion?

Countless advancements and discoveries in science, agriculture, health, governance ... have resulted as a consequence of the mystery. This is God's providence in action, often in the secular world; such action generally is unrecognized by Christians. These advancements are not only a blessing to us, but will be used by God to prepare for the future, as the next age builds upon our Age. There is substantial biblical information indicating that our Age will pave the way for the future earthly Kingdom to experience an explosion in the number of people saved.

The Age of Grace provided the time needed for the full depth of Christ's death to take effect upon humanity. Accordingly, God is saving and blessing believers today in ways He had planned from the beginning for our glory, ways that formerly were unseen and unheard. However, as the time of the crucifixion approached, the fate of the world and the eternal existence of every person who ever lived, hung upon one thread—keeping the secret at all costs. Since God was the only one who knew, the secret was secure; the thread was unbreakable.

This book explores the mystery and, in the process, a very special number will be revealed. No, it is not some prophetic number revealing when the end will occur, but THE Number of the most important event in history. Everyone should know this number, for it represents the event upon which each believer's spiritual life is based.

We humans are simple beings, vulnerable to the inherent hostility of the physical universe. Through God's wisdom and preparations, we are protected and provided for in that universe. His wisdom and preparations for us in the spiritual world are even more incredible. Accordingly, based upon His very nature, God has compassion on us simple beings, offering us the ability to become new creatures in Christ. How endearing it is to realize God is the divine champion of the nobodies, the shepherd of those trying to find their way, the upholder of the weak, and the source of comforting for the bereft of this world, all the while desiring to save anyone who will believe in Jesus Christ as Savior.



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## Author

Steve was born in Wisconsin, USA, and raised by Arthur and Avis Shober, strong Christian parents who were instrumental in teaching him about the Lord. He is married to Ruth, and they have three daughters: Tamara, Tabitha, and Terah. They have three grandchildren: Christian, Trinity, and Aleah. Engineering was his primary profession after receiving a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and a master's degree in structural engineering. Steve is a military veteran who served in the Army in the late 1960s.

Numerous secular and faith-based publications have been authored by Steve, and he has served on many engineering/scientific committees, boards, and religious organizations. After retiring from the engineering profession, he received a doctorate in naturopathy and worked as a natural health doctor. Natural health was his passion for a time, but he felt the Lord's leading to accept an offer to become the director of Growing Up in Grace, a Sunday School ministry. Then, in 2012, he saw the need to create a new ministry to reach teens and adults, *Grace 4 You Ministries, Inc.* Steve's goal is to write materials and books that explore the Word of God, freely proclaiming the Word in a way that enables the reader to be drawn closer to the Lord and to experience His truth. His writings show that he has a desire to be free of the political and religious correctness of our day, while at the same time being constrained by the truth God has revealed in His Word.

## PART 1

Ancient Past:

God's Wisdom and Secret  
Divine Plans  
Preparations for Humans



## CHAPTER ONE

### God's Sacred Secret

Nothing in this world is hidden forever. The gold which has lain for centuries unsuspected in the ground, reveals itself one day on the surface. Sand turns traitor, and betrays the footstep that has passed over it; water gives back to the tell-tale surface the body that has been drowned. Fire itself leaves the confession, in ashes, of the substance consumed in it. Hate breaks its prison-secrecy in the thoughts, through the doorway of the eyes; and love finds the Judas who betrays it by a kiss. Look where we will, the inevitable law of revelation is one of the laws of nature: the lasting preservation of a secret is a miracle which the world has never yet seen. *(Wilkie Collins, from the novel No Name)*

#### Introduction

The following biblical text is well known in Christendom. The thorough examination of these verses provides the underlying purpose of this book.

*... that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love him.' But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit, For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man expect the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:5-11).*

The main theme of this biblical text is the power of God, in which our faith should rest. Faith is what God seeks in each person, and He provides Salvation to the person with faith. Salvation is based upon God's power and wisdom, whereby He freely saves the believer by His grace when the person has faith in Christ's death for his or her sins. Faith is a very simple thing, and not based upon understand everything in Scripture. The faith He seeks from each person, is the belief that each of us is a sinner, sin has a death penalty, and Christ took the place of each of us on the Cross to pay for our sins. That is the Gospel in a nutshell. However, as a believer we will want to dig deeper into the Word to learn more and

more about the Lord and His plans for us; by doing so, our lives are enriched, and we grow in our appreciation for Him.

The Apostle Paul lets us know the wisdom of God can only be understood by the mature in Christ; of course, he is speaking of spiritual maturity. The specific wisdom he mentions was a hidden wisdom (neat stuff for conspiracy and mystery buffs) that God had established before creating the world. The text indicates God had developed a plan before time began, and in His wisdom determined that some part of that plan had to be kept hidden, kept a mystery. Now why would a loving and caring God keep something secret (the word mystery means secret)? Is that not opposed to our concept of God as open and self-disclosing to all?

The Apostle Paul provides the answer when he states a most remarkable thing: if the rulers of this Age had known of God's secret, they would not have crucified Christ. At first glance, we may question why God did not reveal this mystery sooner in order to protect His Son from a horrible death. Clearly, the text says those who crucified Christ did not know of this hidden mystery and, if they had, they would not have crucified Him. Then we begin to wonder, "Wait, what would the world be like if Christ had not been crucified?"

The text continues by saying that from the beginning, we humans did not see, hear, or perceive many things because God kept those things from us. God progressively revealed those things as time advanced. However, Paul says there was a special wisdom—a peculiar body of truth—that had been kept a secret from the beginning of time and finally revealed to the Apostle Paul, *"But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit."* The fact there was some special wisdom, only revealed in the mid-first century, has incredible implications as we will see. This wisdom was kept closely hidden by God for thousands of years and for a very important reason: it was only revealed when the need for secrecy had passed. In God's perfectly chosen time, God revealed this mystery to Paul and his associates. Clearly, there was something that had to be kept a secret in the past, and the reason is clear; if it were revealed too soon, Christ would not have been crucified. So, at this time, we know God had to keep a secret, but we do not know *what* the secret was. Furthermore, we do not know *why* the rulers of this age would not have crucified Christ had they known the mystery. What was so unknown, so top secret, in God's mystery that it would have prevented Christ's death? Clearly, if He had not been crucified, the entire course of human history would have been altered forever.

An un-crucified Christ was totally unacceptable to God; His death was the centerpiece of God's plan for humans. The crucifixion of Christ was an absolute requirement, and there was nothing more important; without His death not one human could ever be saved. Indeed, God inspired the Apostle Paul to write, *"but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God"* (1 Cor. 1:23-24). The power and wisdom of God are portrayed in the death of Christ; so, whatever the secret was, knowledge of it would have somehow prevented the death God required for our sakes.

God knew He had to keep a secret in His eternal struggle with Satan. The need to do so is at the core of the biblical text under consideration, *"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory"* (1 Cor. 2:7). God's eternal purpose (plan) for humans was developed before the foundation of the world; thus, with the plan in mind, God had an inconceivable number of events to direct and guide to ensure the plan worked as designed. We can only understand, in a miniscule manner, all that had to be done. A complete understanding is found only in

the realm of the Almighty. There are many things we do not consider, but take for granted that were necessary for His plan to succeed. Early on, before the ages began, He had to prepare a hospitable home for us in a hostile world. Preparing such a home was no small matter; indeed, it is a study that reveals the awesomeness of God and His special provisions for the humans He would create. Sometime after preparing us a home, He began to execute His redemptive plans, and they have continued throughout the course of human history. However, redemption in all ages depended upon one future event: THE central event in all of history.

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*God did not keep a secret because He wanted to withhold truth,  
but because knowledge of that truth would have changed history,  
resulting in no person being saved, ever.*

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Christ's death was THE central event in human history. As previously stated, our first thoughts about Christ's death may relate to how nice it would have been if the Innocent One did not have to die an "unfair" death. Reality rudely wakes us up, with a jolt. We realize that if that death had not occurred, for whatever reason, there would be no such thing as Salvation; no one could ever be saved, not at any time in human history. (This will be addressed later.) The result would be that every human would have to suffer a hostile, eternal existence without God (Hell). There were countless planned events on God's list, but this was THE event around which history and eternity revolved. Satan knew of His death; it was no secret. However, there was something resulting from His death that Satan and the earthly rulers did not know about, that is, the subject of the mystery. Had he and the earthly rulers known, they would have ensured His crucifixion did not occur. That is how important it was to keep the mystery hidden, and why we need to understand it. God had to ensure this one part of His plan was kept strictly hidden because only if it were hidden would Christ be crucified. Again we come to this point: what was so mysterious in God's plan that knowledge of it would have sidetracked Satan's desire to kill Christ?

In the Gospel records, God and Satan, for a brief time, seemed to be on the same page, agreeing that Christ had to die. All of history and all of eternity hinged on this one event; it had to take place as God planned, at all costs. It did! Then, in due time, God's purpose was fully revealed; that which had been hidden for ages was finally made known. The hidden truth, of necessity, had to occur after Christ's death. Had the biblical mystery not been kept a secret, the whole course of human history—and God's eternal purpose for mankind—would have been rendered meaningless. This book will explain why.

In order to clarify some of what has been stated, we must understand that the concept of pre-creation planning is supported by Scripture: *"Who hath saved us, and called us ... according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the World began"* (2 Tim. 1:9). God had to plan first, and then put the plan into action, starting with creation. His plan for mankind included the provision for Salvation, the life hereafter, the eternal state, how God would reveal Himself to mankind over time, and so on. Of course, developing a perfect plan is consistent with God's very nature and character, and contradicts any notions of chance, reactive adjustments, or arbitrariness with God. God had it all planned, in detail, before human history began.

God planned well in advance and then revealed the truth humans needed as time progressed. Since the truth for our Age has been revealed, the believer needs to have the answers to the following questions clearly articulated:

1. *Exactly what was the mystery hidden by God for thousands of years, and*
2. *Why would the rulers not have crucified Christ had they known it?*

This book primarily will consider the time period in which we live, the Age of Grace <sup>1</sup>, because that Age is the key to understanding the text (1 Cor. 2:5-11). The Age of Grace began in the mid-first century and will continue until the Lord comes in the Rapture. The general view of the text under consideration contends the rulers of this Age, whoever they were, did not understand who Christ was or the meaning of His death. Thus, the general view is that Christ's death, and/or the gospel, was the mystery. We will discuss this in more detail later, but, for now, we can say it is true the Roman rulers did not really know much about Christ. The spiritual truth behind His death would be of little concern to them. They simply did not care about the Jewish religion so His death was of little consequence to them as long as their civil laws were upheld. Neither did the Jewish religious rulers understand who Christ was or the significance of His death because their minds were blinded; thus, they thought He was an imposter.

The civil and religious rulers were ignorant of Christ, not because that truth was hidden, but because their understanding was blinded by Satan. The common viewpoint is based upon the fact that there was a poor understanding of who Christ was. Yes, there was a poor understanding, but we need to search elsewhere for a correct view because Christ's death was well prophesied in Scripture, whether or not they understood who He was or His death. Thus, they may have not understood, but not because God kept the truth hidden. Paul could not possibly say Christ's death was hidden by God for ages and generations because it was well stated in Scripture. His death was clearly not the mystery.

The real culprit in all this was Satan; he knew all along who Christ was and that God intended Him to be crucified. It is Satan who blinded the eyes of the religious rulers so that they did not understand Christ was the Messiah. Satan wanted to go through with the crucifixion even though he knew Christ was the Messiah, and knew Christ had to die to save mankind. Neither Christ's death nor the gospel of Salvation were the mystery—Satan knew about them. However, what he did not know about was the mystery. This mystery was so top secret it had to be hidden from everyone by God, through all the ages, including the angels in Heaven and Satan. Had Satan known of this mystery, he would have influenced the rulers of this Age to not crucify Christ. The course of history would have been forever altered, and God's plan would go up in smoke. Before we define exactly what the mystery (secret) was, we will discuss secrets, in general, so we can gain needed perspective on the matter of keeping secrets.

## Secrets

### Personal Secrets

In order to introduce the concept of God's sacred secret, we will briefly look at secrets in general. There are at least three types of human secrets (personal, great, and top), all of which are important to someone. With rare exceptions, human secrets do not amount to much in the grand scheme of things, either for humanity or the universe in general. Some of our personal secrets relate just to ourselves, such as certain thoughts, sinful desires, fears, hopes for the future.... Each of us also has secrets that relate to interpersonal relationships: "Did you know that Sally and Joe are breaking up; don't tell anyone because this is top secret." We even have secrets with larger groups: "We can't let anyone know, but when I go to the

<sup>1</sup> The Age of Grace is also called the Church Age and the Dispensation of Grace. The usage of the term, Age of Grace, is based upon the fact it is easily understood, but each of the other terms has important features.



party, I'm going to dress up as a space alien." These secrets affect very few people, the consequences are small (except if you are Sally or Joe), and such secrets have to be kept a very short time period.

Some of our personal secrets are longer lived and kept hidden from everyone for our entire lives, for fear others may know the truth about us. We are often ashamed of some deep, dark thing in our lives; however, secrets are not always related to dark things. We may not want to let others know of good things we have done in order to keep that event between us and the Lord. Whatever our personal secrets are, their impact upon the world is miniscule and only for a limited time.

## The Great Secrets

There are more impactful secrets than our personal secrets; such secrets last for a longer time and affect many more people. These will be termed "great secrets." A computer search for items considered to be the world's biggest secrets, for all times, revealed some interesting results. The lists is shown below, and no order of importance is implied.

- A. Moai of Easter Island
- B. Stonehenge in England
- C. Great Wall of China
- D. Machu Picchu in Peru
- E. Great Pyramids of Giza, Egypt

Notice that these secrets are all things that were constructed by humans long ago. What is important to us about these great secrets is that they are not secrets to us, because we know of their existence; they are secrets in the sense that we do not understand them. Indeed, it is because we know of them that we wonder about them, since the reason for their existence is hidden from our understanding. So, we wonder why anyone would create these items, when did they do it, and how could primitive people accomplish such incredible things? Our lack of understanding results from a lack of information today, but that information once was well known; now it has been erased through time. Nothing about these big secrets was, or is, intentionally hidden from us by their creators. The purpose or reason for these items has merely become a fading memory, and their function outdated. As archeologists, anthropologists, scientists, linguists, and others continue to study these wonders, many answers to their secrets will emerge and fill our understanding. The point is that these items are not secrets in the sense their existence or purpose was intentionally hidden from us; they are mysterious secrets in the sense that our knowledge is incomplete, so we are filled with wonder. These secrets do affect many more people than our personal secrets, and the consequences of finding the truth about them is equally more significant.

## Top Secrets

Personal secrets are minor in scope, the great secrets are mysterious because of the loss of information about them. There is one more group of secrets, top secrets, but only one or two of these top secrets has any major impact upon humanity. A little research revealed what are considered the most top secret

things in our world. These top secret items are listed below; items become more top secret with decreasing numbers.

7. Kentucky Fried Chicken's secret herbs and spices recipe.
6. Did Adolf Hitler fake his death, and then live in South America?
5. What lies buried beneath Oak Island in Nova Scotia?
4. Top nuclear research by various nations.
3. Area 51 in the deep Nevada desert.
2. Where is the Ark of the Covenant?
1. Life after death, Heaven and Hell.

Notice the list of top secrets is different that the list of great secrets. The difference is that the very existence of many of these items was/is intentionally hidden from us. These are secrets because we never did have information about them, not because we have lost information about them, as is the case with the great secrets. Kentucky Fried Chicken's recipe may be a secret, but it is hardly of importance—we can still enjoy the benefits of that recipe whether we know the secret recipe or not. A more top secret item was found in recently released Federal Bureau of Investigation files, indicating Adolph Hitler's death was likely faked. If so, we have to wonder about the reliability of what we were taught in school history. According to these newly released files, Hitler escaped Germany after World War II and spent the rest of his days in South America. This had to be kept top secret because if anyone outside of Hitler's trusted group had known, he would have been tracked down and captured.

As we proceed down the list, Oak Island, in Nova Scotia, enters the discussion. This island has been the subject of treasure hunters since the late 1700s. There seem to be countless theories and snippets of evidence pointing to who may have buried what on this island. If anything is buried there, the intention was to hide the existence of the treasure and its exact location from everyone, except those who hid it. If anything was intentionally hidden beneath this island, it is a true secret. What really makes this island's mystery a top secret relates to what may be hidden there, perhaps something far more intriguing and valuable than gold and silver. Some people believe the biblical Ark of the Covenant is buried there. However, with enough effort and money, the secret of this island can be revealed through exploration.

The Manhattan project was America's top secret for many years during World War II. This top secret project led to the development of the atomic bomb. It was such a secret that many of those working on this project did not know what was truly going on; they only knew their small part, while the overall scope and significance of this project was hidden from them. This project had to be kept secret at all costs; if found out, it could have altered the course of the war and many more lives may have been lost.

Area 51 in Nevada is the United States Government's top secret location for clandestine military testing, for hiding the top secrets of the Central Intelligence Agency, and, some say, the place to hide unidentified flying objects from other worlds. The government initially denied Area 51 existed; now they just do not tell anyone what really occurs there—a true top secret facility.

We have now come to the remaining two items on the top secrets list, the Ark of the Covenant and the afterlife. The Ark was a special requirement of the Lord for use in the Holy of Holies within the Tabernacle (later the Temple). The Ark was a rectangular chest/box about 44 inches long, and 26 inches in both width and height (1.1 by 0.7 meters) (Ex. 25:10-22; Lev. 37:1-15). It was made of wood and covered with pure gold, had a gold crown (decorative molding) around it, and two golden poles with which to carry it. On top of the Ark was the Mercy Seat (basically a lid). On the ends of the Mercy Seat, and part of it, were two cherubim made of pure gold; they were facing each other with their wings stretched out touching one another. They looked down upon the Ark, and their outstretched wings formed a sort of protected area (a cove) on the Mercy Seat, where the Lord would reside and communicate with the High Priest. The Ark eventually contained the two stone tablets with the Ten Commandments, written by the very hand of God (Ex. 34:1; 1 Kg. 8:9). The Ark was the most important item in the Jewish Temple: it was of extraordinary power, and was the center of Jewish worship. It was kept in the Holy of Holies in the Temple, where the high priest met with God once a year and placed blood upon the Mercy Seat of the Ark for the atonement of sins. This artifact is not only of interest from a historic point of view, it has incredible religious, cultural, political, and international implications today. It is of the highest religious and international intrigue ever known. Does the Ark of the Covenant of the Old Testament exist today? If the Ark still exists, where is it? If anyone knows this secret, it is the best kept secret by any human group in history.

The Ark was last noted in the Bible around 624 BC, as recorded in 2 Chronicles 35:3, after which time its location became unknown. The Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BC, after years of warfare; the Ark could have been carried away by the Babylonians between 624 BC and 587 BC. The Babylonians kept inscrutable records of what they took from the Temple, and of the articles and vessels of the Temple that were returned to Jerusalem around 536 BC. However, there was no Babylonian mention of the Ark being taken or returned (Ezra 1:7, 11). It is improbable that this unique, holy, historically renowned item would not be specifically mentioned by the Babylonians or in the Bible, if it were either taken or returned. Theories abound, one of which suggests it was hidden by the Jewish priests before the Babylonian captivity, most likely beneath the Temple Mount. An apocryphal writing suggests Jeremiah hid the Ark in a cave in Mt. Nebo, today's Jordan, where Moses died (this mountain is due east of Jerusalem). Another theory holds that it was secreted away into Ethiopia (or that area) and put in a secure hiding place by Ethiopian Jews (Solomon's offspring), and to this day protected by specially prepared guards. Another theory suggests the Ark was originally hidden beneath the Temple, then taken out of Jerusalem by the Knights Templar (1129-1312 AD) to the British Isles, and later hidden beneath Oak Island in Nova Scotia.

Many biblical prophecy experts believe the original Ark must exist today because it will be required for future Temple worship during the upcoming Tribulation period. Theories of the Ark's whereabouts abound because of this belief. Some believe the Ark is the "present" brought from the area of Ethiopia to Israel in the latter days, as mentioned in Isaiah 18:7. Some think it is the standard (banner, flag, or ensign) mentioned in the Bible many times in connection with the latter days, unifying Israel's people and giving them hope (Isa. 5:26, 11:12, 18:3; Zech. 9:16). The Ark, irrespective of any future uses, is the most sought after, the most mysterious, the highest valued archeological-religious treasure that has ever existed—without equal. This item's existence and location are the best kept secrets by any humans, proven so by the many centuries of secrecy. If the original Ark has a future purpose, God may be the One guarding this top secret so that it is not discovered until the right time.

Now we come to what is considered the top secret of all times. This secret relates to something beyond our world and stretches the limits of human comprehension: the afterlife in Heaven and Hell. This secret has a significant relationship to our topic. This secret introduces a whole new concept in secrets; this is

not a human secret, but something mysterious and beyond the actions of humans. However, the afterlife is not a secret in the sense that we do not know about it; we do know of the existence of Heaven and Hell. The things God has prepared for humans in Heaven and Hell were secrets in Isaiah's day (as quoted in 1 Cor. 2:6) in the sense people did not know all they wished to know. However, that all changed with the teachings of many Old Testament prophets (after Isaiah) and with the coming of Jesus Christ in His first advent. In Jesus' day, the people did get to touch, see, and hear directly from Him, all they needed to know about the heavenly Kingdom, which would come to earth. By the time of Jesus, Isaiah's words were fulfilled. Paul addresses the matter of God's secrets in First Corinthians 2:6, and makes the point that Isaiah was indeed ignorant of the afterlife because God had not revealed much of that information in Isaiah's day. That information was revealed later, especially in the Gospel records. The twelve Apostles were privileged to learn all Isaiah wanted to know, and they got it in first person from the Lord (Jn.12:44-50).

For us living today, the astounding fact is that God has revealed exactly what we need to know about the life hereafter, yet many do not accept it. While specific details may be lacking, there is no earthy way to get such information by scientific means, exploration, philosophy, space travel, or any earthly means. Since some people are not satisfied with what God has revealed; a common ploy is to resort to First Corinthians 2:6 to prove their ignorance of what God is doing: *"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."* People reason that no one can possibly know about the afterlife because God has not told us; furthermore, it is undiscoverable by human effort or wisdom. This is tantamount to saying, we know little about Heaven and Hell because God does not tell us. However, this verse is saying just the opposite, that is, Isaiah did not know some things of the afterlife, but that information was revealed later. What was true in Isaiah's day was no longer true in Paul's day, and certainly not true today. Isaiah's words were true in his day, but God then revealed that information, especially in the person of Jesus Christ. Paul uses the passage in Isaiah to inform the early church of another mystery, larger than anything Isaiah ever knew or anyone had ever realized, and that mystery was revealed in Paul's day (mid-first century).

## God's Top Secret

Paul uses First Corinthians 2:6-7 to say there was yet another (beyond what Isaiah mentioned) secret concerning God's wisdom, which in other ages no one knew about. Just as the believers did not know much about the afterlife in Isaiah's day, Paul indicates all of humanity had a total lack of knowledge concerning something else. However, this time there was a big difference, that is, no one even knew there was something hidden from them. The difference between Isaiah and Paul is that Isaiah knew there was an afterlife, but did not know all he wanted to know; contrarily, Paul and all believers had no clue a top secret existed in God's heart. In both cases, God did reveal these truths when it was appropriate to do so. Thus, Paul says, *"But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit"* (1Cor. 2:7a).

First Corinthians 2:6 cannot be used to say Paul was referring to the afterlife or Heaven. Paul quotes Isaiah for the purpose of saying God does reveal the information we need when it is His time. What God revealed was *God's secret*, which had a direct bearing upon Christ's crucifixion and our Salvation. This secret turns out to be *the top, top secret, of all time*. Even more secret than the Number One Secret. Today we have that hidden, secret wisdom revealed to us, enabling us to see, hear, and know the secret things God has prepared for us. Even if a person initially believes Paul is referring to the same thing as Isaiah (the afterlife), the fact Paul says, *"But, God has revealed them to us..."*, ought to make it clear we cannot use those verses today to claim ignorance of the afterlife.

What God revealed to Paul was not about Heaven, but secret things no one had ever seen, heard or imagined. God revealed something even more top secret. Isaiah seems to have thought knowledge of the afterlife would have been great, but he had no inkling such knowledge was kid's stuff compared to what God had hidden in His mind. God did not reveal kid's stuff to Paul, but a secret beyond what anyone had imagined, or knew existed. It was so top secret, God kept it from anyone's knowledge from the beginning of time. His secret was so sensitive that had it been found out, the course of human history would have been altered forever. Not only would human history been altered, but eternity itself would have been completely changed. The secret impacts the Salvation of every person that ever lived; thus, it was not just an abstract theological thought, but instead, something of the utmost, practical importance to each of us. God was not revealing what Heaven was like, but of something that could have prevented everyone from getting there, and if so, it would not matter what Heaven was like. The bottom line is this: not one person would have, or will, ever get to Heaven if the secret were discovered before God intended.

Many of the unknown things on the list of great secrets are discoverable through human effort since the truth has been merely lost over time, not because anyone has hidden the truth. The items on the top secrets list, except for Number One (perhaps Two), are also discoverable over time; the truth may be harder to find because governments and special groups are good at hiding things. For human secrets, the truth eventually comes out, as various activities and events uncover piece after piece of information, which is then woven together to reveal the whole. However, if God is involved in keeping a secret, then everything changes; the secret will remain a mystery until He ordains otherwise. The secret of First Corinthians 2:7 was such a secret.

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*Isaiah knew there was an afterlife, but did not know all he wanted; contrarily, Paul and all believers had no clue a top secret existed in God's heart.*

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The order of secrecy is clear. Our personal secrets are relatively minor compared to governmental secrets, and governmental secrets pale in comparison to God's secrets. His secret was far beyond anything we have seen in the previous lists; human secrets amount to nothing in the grand scheme of things. His secret was so top secret that even Satan and the angels in Heaven did not know of it; and God ensured that for millennia. What was God's secret, the mystery mentioned in the Bible? This book will discuss what that secret was and why it was necessary to keep it a secret, at all cost, and why the rulers of the world would not have crucified Christ had they known. God's secret makes the existence and location of the Ark, the Manhattan Project, Area 51, and what Heaven is like, seem like trivial matters in comparison.

To summarize, God kept something hidden from every human, Satan, and angels, for a very specific reason. He did not keep the secret because He wanted to withhold truth, but because knowledge of that truth would have changed history, resulting in no person's ever being saved. That secret was kept solely in God's mind from the beginning of the world and was revealed in Paul's day because that was the ordained time in God's eternal plan.

The mystery will be discussed in detail later. For now, it will be simply defined as the body of truth God has given to us, for today. The new body of truth revealed a dramatic change in how God was going to deal with humans, a change from Law to Grace. The change from Law to Grace is what overturned the world in the first century (Acts 17:6). This new truth was revolutionary with respect to what had been

revealed before; however, it provided the very foundation required for Christianity. In order to make such a significant change, and for the new truth to have an impact upon humanity, more time was required for the course of human existence. Accordingly, God inserted a new period of time into human history, the Age of Grace, to provide the time required for the mystery to have an impact. What an impact it has had, literally changing the world beyond anything anyone, including Satan, could have imagined.

## **God's Wisdom and Ours**

### **Respecting God's Wisdom**

God had a secret from the very beginning; then, this secret was revealed in the mid-first century. The secret is not arcane Bible trivia or something nice to know, but relevant for today. In coming chapters, the reader will see the secret has an impact upon each person today, and will have an impact upon future ages; this topic is not just typical religious talk. In fact, this topic has implications extending into eternity. The contents of God's secret and why the rulers of the world would not have crucified Christ, are biblical truths of such importance every believer should know them in order to be able to teach others. Not only is each person affected by the secret, but the entire Body of believers (the body of Christ) is a product of the mystery, and that body has a dramatic impact upon our present world. The truths of the mystery are not just earthly in scope, God is using them presently to teach the heavenly hosts about His wisdom. Each person's eternal destiny hinges upon the truths contained within the mystery, which applies to the entire world, including the secular world. There is much to be presented on this critically important topic. Thus, the teaching of God's secret is timely, practical, personal, and relevant.

### **Willingness to Challenge Accepted Beliefs**

In order to understand God's secret, or the Bible in general, a person may find it helpful at times to be willing to challenge accepted beliefs. In a way, each person already employs this concept of challenging accepted beliefs as we adjust to a changing world, or being left behind. Most Christians have a desire to believe everything God says and to live accordingly, but we can become so inflexible in our beliefs that we limit our own understanding. The great heroes of the faith, in Hebrews 13, testified to that desire, and they lived their faith. However, history has not been kind to many other Christians, for it shows they were held captive to the opinions of their time, which shaped their interpretation of the Bible, and they refused to adjust to new truth. In this way, any of us can get into trouble today when we do not distinguish between actual teachings of the Bible and our interpretations of it. No one wants to admit being wrong, but we all need to ask the Lord to guide us daily and help us understand His precious Word.

Two examples will be presented, showing how easy it is for us to hold false interpretations, as though they were the Word itself. One example deals with science and the other with a biblical story. The Bible itself is never wrong; however, our interpretations of what it says can be very wrong, even though we honestly want to be faithful to the Word. The battle is often between what we think the Bible says, and what it really means. When Jesus says, "*You are the salt of the earth*" (Matt. 5:13), the figurative language is obvious, so we recognize what is said has to be carefully interpreted to discover what is meant. However, in many passages determining the difference between what is said and what is meant

is harder; for example, when Jesus says, "...Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Matt. 20:22). What is said seems to refer to a water ceremony, but what is meant clearly relates to suffering and death. Thus, as good stewards of the Word, our interpretations of what the Bible says and what it means may have to be adjusted as we learn new truth and spiritually mature.

At this point, the reader may wonder what the author is trying to peddle. All this talk of being willing to challenge beliefs can have an odd smell, as though some crazy ideas were about to be unloaded, and you should change your views to accept them. In this book, it is very possible some new ideas will be presented because the book does go into some areas not normally considered. However, the purpose of the two examples is to show how any of us can be doing our best to understand the Word, but miss the meaning of the Word. When we miss the true meaning, we may think we are fighting the good fight, but in reality we are only promoting something akin to a flat earth.

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*The minds of most men are in bondage to the commonplace facts of their experience.*  
(Sir Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince*)

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**A Misinterpretation Related to Scientific Discovery.** Several centuries ago, the belief prevailed that no existing animal species could be destroyed; the extinction of any species was inconceivable since it implied a lack of perfection in the original divine plan.<sup>2</sup> If an animal species died out, then why did God create the species? Even worse, the death of a species implied something in God's plan had failed. Clearly, there can be no imperfection with God or His divine plan, so any suggestion to the contrary had to be false. Perfection in the divine plan was intuitively obvious to the authors of the idea, and it makes sense even today. Which of us does not believe in divine perfection? God, by definition, has to be perfect or He is not God. However, the human view of perfection can be taken to the point of absurdity, resulting in wrong interpretations of the Bible.

According to the concept of divine perfection, some Christians incorrectly taught that dinosaurs did not die out, that is, they did not become extinct. So, to uphold this belief, dinosaurs were said to still exist in the ocean depths or remote jungle areas, or the whole idea that fossils represented once living animals was false. Over time, the present-day existence of dinosaurs was proven wrong, and it was convincingly established that fossils do represent once-living creatures. Like it or not, dinosaurs did become extinct, and Christian beliefs had to adjust to that fact. In the day this belief prevailed, people had to reluctantly, over a long period of time, come to grips with the fact their beliefs about the Bible were wrong; as always, the Bible itself was not wrong, but human interpretations were. The proponents of many wrong interpretations sincerely hold their beliefs and have a desire to follow the Word. However, in the end, wrong interpretations can cause great harm to Christianity.

The belief in divine perfection has theological and spiritual value when related to God, but it cannot be used for the purpose of defining or verifying the physical world or scientific discoveries. That is because physical-world facts, truths in the natural world, are not supported by human concepts of perfection. As an example, theologians in the past thought all heavenly bodies had to have perfectly circular orbits, which a perfect God would only create; however, such thinking is neither scientifically correct nor demanded by the Bible. Use of the perfection argument created tension between Christians and scientific

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<sup>2</sup> Mcalla, Arthur; *The Creationist Debate*; Bloomsbury Academic; 2013.

discoveries in the natural world. This sort of tension helped create the notion that science is against God, and we Christians had better fight on God's side. The need for examining accepted beliefs is obvious; sometimes they are correct, sometimes not.

**Misinterpretation of a Biblical Event.** Chapter 11 of Hebrews gives a long list of godly men and women whose lives are an example to us all. These people are called "the heroes of the faith." All these heroes, *"through faith,"* did many marvelous things (Heb. 11:33). In Hebrews 11:32, brief mention is made of a man named Jephthah, who is included with those of whom the Bible says, *"... the world was not worthy ... And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise"* (Heb. 11:38-39). Because of his faith, the Bible says the *"world was not worthy"* of a man like Jephthah. So, maybe we have to learn more of this great man. His daughter is also very important in this story, and the two of them are among the most misunderstood people in the Bible. They may have been understood in their lifetime; however, over the centuries it seems Bible believers have misunderstood Jephthah and have accused him of the most horrible of crimes.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1100s BC, Jephthah was a judge over the nation of Israel. Israel was having conflicts with another country (Ammon), and Jephthah tried very hard to resolve these problems in a peaceful manner. They were fighting over who owned the land (just like today in the Mideast, 3,000 years later). When the Ammonites would not listen to him, it was time for battle. Before he went into battle, Jephthah vowed (made a solemn promise) unto the Lord that if the Lord would allow him to win the battle, *" 'then it will be, that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return ... shall surely be the LORD'S, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering' "* (Judges 11:31). Well, this all sounds pretty good, so far.

The battle took place and the Lord enabled Jephthah to win. Then he went home, *"When Jephthah came to his house ... there was his daughter, coming out to meet him ... and she was his only child"* (Judges 11:34). The worst thing possible happened; his daughter was the first one out the door to greet him (she was probably a teenager). When he saw her, he tore his clothes in sorrow, and said his daughter had made him feel terrible because he had made a vow unto the Lord and could not take it back. Then this young girl of faith said the most remarkable thing, *"My father, if you have given your word to the LORD, do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth..."* (Judges 11:36). But before he kept his vow, the daughter asked that she be allowed to go to the mountains for two months to bewail her virginity (to mourn over the fact she would not be able to get married and have children). He allowed her to go and after the two months, *"... she returned to her father, and he carried out his vow with her which he had vowed"* (Judges 11:39).

What? Did he offer her as a burnt sacrifice? How could Jephthah be a hero of the faith if he did this? Some people believe he did offer her as a sacrifice, but that is very unlikely and where a misunderstanding occurs. He was a man of great faith and so was his daughter. Leviticus 18:21 clearly prevented him from offering her as a burnt sacrifice. God would have been most displeased if he had tried, and Jephthah knew this. It seems likely there is a different interpretation of this story.

Jephthah clearly thought some animal would come out of the house. He refers to "whatever" came out, and refers to what came out as "it," but he did not refer to "whoever." He did not expect a person to come out first, especially his only child whom he loved dearly. In addition, the word "house" can mean a place where animals dwell, and it was not uncommon to have a house where animals stayed in the floor below and people in the floor above (Noah's ark may be like this). So, Jephthah made a vow that turned out

<sup>3</sup> [www.grace4you.com](http://www.grace4you.com), Lesson 14, Being Misunderstood, has more information on this topic.



much differently than he expected, but he and she wanted to keep it since keeping a vow to the Lord was important.

Jephthah had the option of going to the priest and redeeming his daughter (buying her back) for 10 shekels (Lev. 27:2, 5). The Jewish people were very familiar with redeeming a person, for God had given them instructions on this common practice in Exodus 13:13, 15. In Exodus, the firstborn male (human and animal) was the Lord's; thus, the firstborn male animal was to be sacrificed to the Lord, and the firstborn male human was to be redeemed since he could not be sacrificed. In addition, the Lord always made allowances for a vow that could not be kept, for reasons beyond the person's control. In our case, Jephthah could not keep his vow to sacrifice his daughter. However, he could redeem his daughter. While redemption was acceptable, but both Jephthah and his daughter knew of another way that was even truer to the original intent of the vow.

We will consider more carefully what is written, to see what really happened. Judges 11:31b says, "*... shall surely be the LORD'S, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.*" The word "and" can be translated "or," which makes it read that Jephthah would offer whatever came out first as a burnt offering (if an animal), OR, if it were not an acceptable animal, or if it were a person, he would offer it to the Lord in a different way. An unacceptable animal would be an unclean animal (like a donkey); it could not be offered. So, he could give the monetary value of the donkey to the priest and still keep his vow. In this case, the daughter was very acceptable, but not as a burnt sacrifice. She was acceptable as a *woman dedicated to working in the Temple*. The term, "*shall surely be the LORD'S,*" includes the thought she could be the LORD'S special, unmarried, female worker in the Temple for her entire life.

She was not sacrificed; God would have been repulsed by this sacrifice. Instead, she became a woman who served her whole life in the Temple, just as we see in Luke 2:37: "*... and this woman was a widow of about eight-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.*" That is why the daughter bewailed her virginity: she knew she could never get married and have children (she was her father's only child, so he could never have an extended family). If she were going to be a burnt sacrifice, the last thing on her mind would be the fact she were a virgin. She would have bewailed her life, if she were to be sacrificed—not her virginity. She loved her father and one day hoped to have grandchildren for him, but now that could not happen, so she bewailed her virginity.

What an outstanding example of two people of great faith, a faith so strong they were willing to give up probably the most important thing in their lives for the Lord. This story should speak to our hearts about the value of faith and how misunderstandings happen. For centuries, maybe thousands of years, this great man and his daughter have been terribly misunderstood. It seems Satan creates these misunderstandings to undermine the truth of the Bible and to create problems between people. This example shows how easy it is for us to misunderstand the Word and why it is necessary to be willing to examine new ideas to see if they are true. With a correct understanding of this story, we can understand why Jephthah is mentioned in Hebrews 11. A correct understanding results in an increased appreciation for God's care of His saints, not a decreased concept of God because He approved of human sacrifice.

The examples above indicate how a person can sincerely want to believe the Bible, but how easily that desire can be subverted by the person's own misinterpretations. Sometimes a person needs a different perspective, a new paradigm, to enable him or her to grasp the truth. Without question, the Bible is our sole authoritative source for understanding God, providing the means to know and respect His splendor. The inerrant Word of God is our source for doctrine and faith. However, as we delve into our text (1 Cor. 2:5-11), recall that each of us, to one degree or another, has interpretations and opinions of the Bible that we should be willing to challenge. We humans are subject to becoming captive to our experiences and the

dictates of our present world. The teaching of Scripture is always enlightening to our minds, and we are more teachable if we have a willingness to examine our own cherished beliefs. As the truth of the Word emerges, it engenders an understanding of God that is more awesome than before. Through the process of growing in understanding, we are enabled to understand His eternal plan for us, including the secret part of that plan and how that secret part impacts the past, present, and future.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Divine Plan

Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.  
*(Abraham Lincoln)*

***LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done wonderful things, things planned long ago.***  
*(Isa. 25:1, NIV)*

#### Redemptive Plan for Our Age

Throughout the course of human history, the primary plan of God (in all three persons) has been to reveal Himself, explain spiritual truth, and teach the basis of Salvation. Before He began creation, He devised a special plan, a purpose, for the Age of Grace, the Age in which we live. The following verses substantiate that His plan for our Age was developed long ago, before time began. .

1. *"... who had saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before time began" (2 Tim. 1:9).*
2. *"... in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began" (Titus 1:2).*
3. *"... just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in Love" (Eph. 1:4).*

His plan included establishing the way of Salvation and providing special spiritual blessings for those in the Age of Grace (AOG). God had a plan in mind for all ages, but the verses above apply specifically to our Age. God's plan included a special means of Salvation, by *being in Christ*, which is peculiar terminology applicable to our Age. His plan of Salvation is based solely upon faith, without works, which is a change from all previous ages in which faith plus obedience (works) were required. Certainly, anything this important had to be clearly established and planned from the beginning, so that all the intrinsic parts could be put into action at the correct time. The phrase used above, "being in Christ," may sound odd, but it is a spiritual reality, a position, the believer receives by simple faith in Christ. Upon faith the believer is identified with Christ and made one with Him; when we are one with Christ, we are

in Him and He is in us. God is merely saying Salvation today comes by being in Christ, and we get into Christ by faith.

### Importance of Understanding the Plan

In the beginning, God chose the means of Salvation, which was based upon being in Christ. However, God's eternal plan contained a mystery (mystery can be translated as secret <sup>4</sup>), something He never told anyone, not even the angels in heaven. That secret was revealed to the Apostle Paul in the first century. The actual secret, making it known, the necessity of it being a secret, and so on, will be discussed in detail later. In this chapter, we want to establish the fact God did have a secret, and it existed from the very beginning, all according to His plan. Below are four verses, out of many, which help (or, clearly do) establish the existence of a secret, which was hidden from the beginning of time. Please note, the words *ages*, *time*, and *world* are derived from the same general, root Greek word, but translated differently in various verses and Bible translations.

1. *"... and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3:9).*
2. *"Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began" (Rom. 16:25).*
3. *"... the mystery which has been hidden form ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints" (Col. 1:26).*
4. *"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory" (1 Cor. 2:7).*

From the collective teaching of these verses, and verses shown previously, we learn some very critical things:

- Before time began, God had a predestined plan for the humans that He would create. That plan was in His mind from the beginning, that is, before the ages and before the world began.
- There was a mystery (*secret*) in the Bible. For now, the mystery should be understood to be the body of truth that defines our Age, the Age in which the full measure of Christ's death is experienced by the believer.
- The mystery was intentionally kept hidden (thus a secret) by God.
- The reason for keeping the mystery hidden is known, that is, if Satan and the rulers of this world knew what the mystery was, they would not have crucified Christ. What we do not know, at this time, is what was in that mystery that would have caused them not to want to crucify Him.

God clearly had something specifically planned in His mind before time began. His plan could also be referred to as His purpose for humans. Thus, we can say without controversy, God had predestined and ordained an eternal plan that would take place when He determined the time was appropriate. When the

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<sup>4</sup> Since the word mystery can be translated secret, the two words will be used interchangeably.

appropriate time came, the plan was revealed and put into action; we are the fortunate recipients of that plan. The concept of time, before creation, is not possible for us to understand, since we measure time by days, years, and so on, which did not exist before creation. If we could somehow measure time before time, who knows; perhaps God's plan may have existed for a "gazillion" years. Although the plan was predetermined before time began, the execution of the plan could not begin until time began. Time began, as we reckon time, at the creation of the universe (to an astronomer this is an extremely vague and imprecise statement, but it supplies a frame of reference for this study). Thus, God's plan depended upon creation of the universe, especially the earth.<sup>5</sup>

Part of our nature as humans, perhaps because of being created in His image, is the desire to know how and where we fit into the larger picture. This is true at home, work, society, and for God's eternal plan. For example, in society we need to know if we are in this group or that group, where we fit within that group, and the purpose of the group. Thus, we need to know God's overall purpose/plan and how we fit into it. God's overall plan had to do with the various ages throughout human history, but the secret part of His plan had to do with our specific Age. If God had something planned from the very beginning, and had to keep it a secret, each of us should have more than a casual curiosity about this whole matter. Specifically, we will want to know, "What does it mean to me and where do I fit in?" We become awed with God as the impact of what He has done, over the eons, bears upon our hearts. His plan is so stupendous that it is beyond our ability to comprehend it, or even to understand the intricacies of what was involved in securing our Salvation. Our concept of God is enlarged as we realize more and more of what the Almighty has done for us. An enlarged concept of God creates astonishment within us, and imbues us with reverence for what He has done.

To gain the proper perspective, we need to step back from what we know today and from our common experiences. We will go back in time, to the time before humans existed, to learn just a bit of what God has done for us and to grasp a little of what was necessary to bring about His plan. As we step back to glimpse a larger perspective, we will need to consider the entire universe—the really big picture. We will be careful to restrict this discussion to one chapter, so as not to bore some, but to enlighten those who find this type of information helpful. This discussion responds to the proposition that if we do not recognize the big picture of what God is doing, it is hard to understand the individual parts. The big picture and the individual parts work together to create a full picture of God and His actions. If we do not have a rudimentary understanding of the big picture and God's eternal plan, we can easily get lost in the parochial, small issues of our daily lives. Thus, the goal is to make sure we do not get caught in the classic trap of not being able to see the forest (big picture) because of the trees (issues of life).

Two of the most significant features of God's eternal plan are Christ's death and human Salvation. If we know these, we have a rudimentary command of the important spiritual items affecting our lives. However, a rudimentary understanding is often not as rewarding as a deeper knowledge. Establishing the overall perspective of what He has planned enables us to see the important items leading to those two features; in addition, we can see how we fit into that eternal plan. Knowing every detail of His plan is not necessary, but increased understanding helps us better comprehend Scripture. What is really important to know, is the part of His plan dealing with the death of Christ, which requires we step back to get the larger view of what God is doing.

As an example of perspective, consider a person who wants to operate a bulldozer, pushing soil around to the required place and height. That person can do the job by following orders and observing survey markers showing locations and elevations. The person can do the job without knowing the details of the

<sup>5</sup> Based upon the verses above, a rather odd thought may arise in our minds, that is, did God create us for the world, or did He create the world for us? This is an old theological question and will be answered later.

overall plan of the project; however, gaining some perspective helps a person see how he or she fits into the overall project and provides a sense of accomplishment and worth. Knowing some of the overall plan enables the person to know if he or she is building a dam, a highway, or a subdivision. A broader perspective broadens horizons, with a corresponding appreciation for the plan and for where a person fits into it. Thus, perspective provides identity with the plan and purpose.

### **Creating a Place for the Plan**

In the beginning, God had to create a home for us, so there was a location for His plan to take place. Creating a home also initiated human time; thus, the phrase, "in the beginning." Creating that home was no small matter; so, understanding what He has done, creates in us an informed appreciation of what our Lord has done for us. The appreciation we gain is immense, as we realize the scope and wisdom involved in creating a home for us, especially in light of the fact the universe is a very hostile place and great precautions were required to provide a safe place for very fragile humans. The special precautions exemplify His creative power and omniscience, since He alone could foresee the hostility there would be in the universe. The hostility referred to relates to the inherent dangers as part of creation. These dangers are not the result of sin or something brought about by Satan. Many things have a good aspect, but also have a harmful aspect if used incorrectly. Some examples may help clarify this. Gravity was good and necessary for life, but it could have had a hostile (harmful) effect if Adam were to fall out of a tree. Fire was a wonderful thing from God and has blessed humans wonderfully; but if Eve were to put her hand in it, she would have been burned. Water was necessary for life, but deep water could have cause the harmful effect of drowning. Gravity, fire, and water were all very good when God's purpose for them was followed; if not, humans could easily have been harmed. In the original creation, and today, there were extremes in radiation, cosmic forces, temperatures, gravitation, and so on, in the universe. These were not the result of sin, nor were they bad in a moral sense; but, these important aspects of creation could be harmful to humans. They were there from the beginning. Since these items could have a harmful impact upon humans, God, in His wisdom, planned to protect us from them right from the beginning. This again shows His nurture and care for us.

His plan for mankind required making a habitable home for us in a hostile universe. Understanding this physical home issue can be hard enough, but doing so helps us grasp the deeper and harder to understand spiritual issues. We do not want to lose sight of the fact God's provisions in preparing our natural home pale in comparison to what He purposed for us in the spiritual realm. If the relatively minor thing of preparing us a home is breathtaking, think of the major matter of our Salvation and all that goes with it. Studying the care He took in creating our habitable home magnifies our appreciation of Him, and draws attention to what He has/is doing for us in the spiritual world.

We will start our view of our natural home by considering our home galaxy, the Milky Way. The word galaxy comes from *galakt*, the Greek word for milk. When we, or the ancients, look at the stars on a dark night, we often see a light, wispy, white band going across the sky, having the appearance of a milky road (see Figure 2.1). This band is called the Milky Way, the origin of our galaxy's name. The band is the result of billions of stars, so far away we do not see individual stars, but a general cloudy looking band of "milk." Our galaxy is a disk, and the light band we see is the result of looking in the direction of the plane of our galaxy, that is, looking through the area where most stars exist. We are seeing the light from billions of stars, which combine to produce the milky band. When we look in other directions, away from the plane of our galaxy, there are fewer stars and no milky appearance.

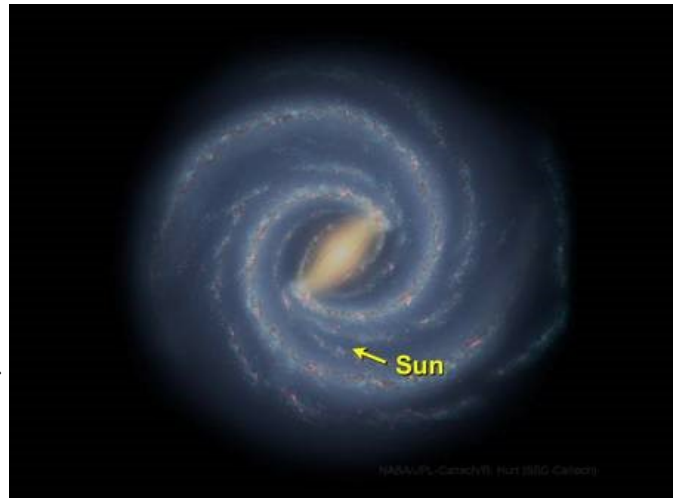


**Figure 2.1.** A view of the night sky. The band of light is called the Milky Way. The dark areas in the Milky Way are dust clouds and particles, blocking starlight from reaching us.

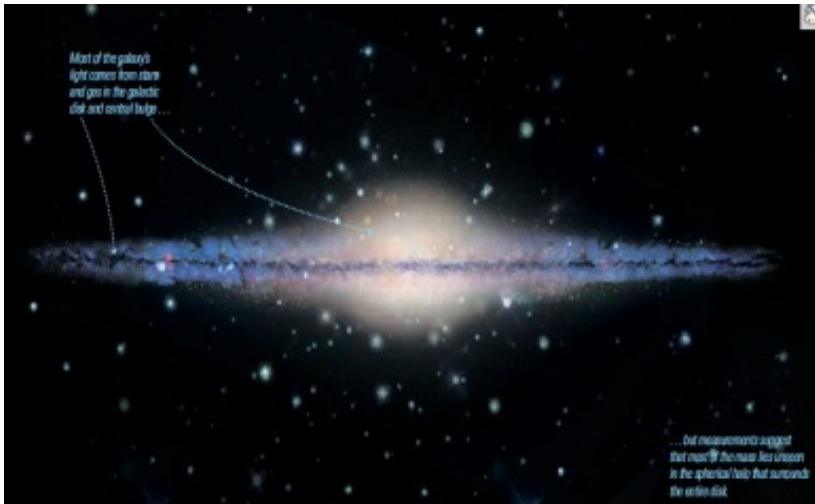
If we could see our home galaxy from face-on, it would look somewhat like a round spinning disk (like a dinner plate or frisbee) (see Figure 2.2). In Figure 2.2, there are bands of stars spiraling around the central region. The spiral arms are composed of billions of stars. The spiral arms are an important part of the structure of our galaxy; thus, the Milky Way is referred to as a spiral galaxy. If we could see our galaxy from the side, we would see it was thin, but with a mound near the center (the galactic bulge) (see Figure 2.3).

**Figure 2.2.** An artist's rendering of the Milky Way Galaxy, showing arms of stars spiraling around the galaxy.

There are no actual pictures of the entire Milky Way Galaxy, since the fastest space ship cannot get outside our own Galaxy in one lifetime to take pictures. Other spiral galaxies, which we can photograph, provide the data for Figures 2.2 and 2.3. Over 100 billion stars are in our galaxy, and the spiral arms are composed of high concentrations of stars. The galaxy in Figure 2.2 is thought to be spinning clockwise. The Hubble space telescope has confirmed the Milky Way is just one of billions of other galaxies. Most of the Milky Way is open space, with huge distances between stars. For example, our nearest neighboring star is four light years away (24 trillion miles).



In the northern hemisphere, everything we can see in the sky with the naked eye is within our galaxy, with the exception of the Andromeda galaxy, which can be seen very faintly. Our galaxy is around 100,000 light-years in diameter (light travels at 186,000 miles per second, one light year calculates to be a distance of six trillion miles). So, our galaxy is 100,000 times six trillion miles in diameter; which is too large to comprehend outside of mathematic notation. The Milky Way is approximately 6000 light years thick in the outer disk areas. The galaxy from an edge view shows the central bulge, where the older stars predominate and where a black hole is thought to exist, Figure 2.3.



**Figure 2.3.** A typical spiral galaxy would look like this in a side view.

Observations of other galaxies and our own galaxy reveal that stars are being born and dying in a galaxy. The younger stars predominate in the outer-arm regions. Closer to the core, and in the bulge, are the older stars. Many pictures of other galaxies show the hot, white/blue stars predominate in the disk area (where the arms are). In the bulge area, the yellow, older stars predominate.<sup>6</sup> The stars near the central

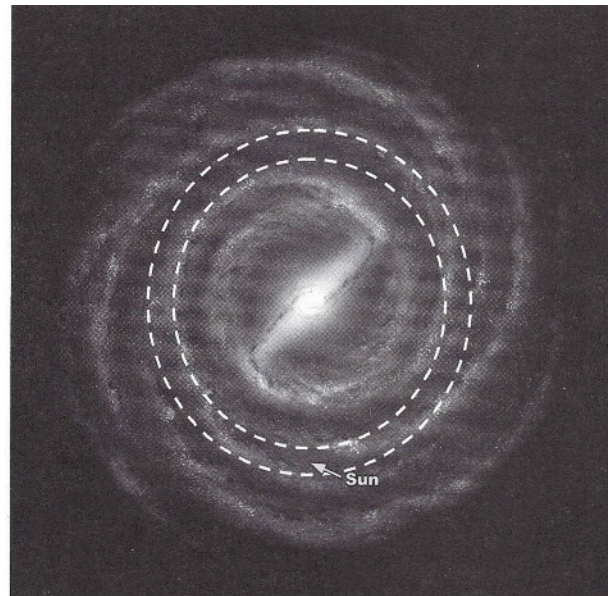
area are slowly being drawn toward the very center, where it is likely a black hole is gobbling them up. Because of this star destruction, the core gives off extreme amounts of deadly radiation.

### His Protective Care

Our solar system is approximately 28,000 light years from the center of our galaxy, and located between major spiral arms (see Figure 2.4). Our entire solar system is so small, relatively, that it could not be seen in Figures 2.2 - 2.4. Our solar system is snuggled between arms and in the plane of the galaxy. Our solar system revolves around the galaxy, along with the spiral arms and other stars. Our location in the galaxy is no accident; our solar system is precisely located in a small band in which human life is able to survive.

**Figure 2.4.** The Galactic Habitable Zone, a narrow band in our galaxy in which life is possible.

There are other types of galaxies, but most scientists believe life, especially human life, is only possible in a spiral galaxy, as ours. However, within most of our galaxy, life is not possible; it is only possible within a small circular area called the Galactic Habitable Zone (GHZ). If a star and its planet(s) lie within this zone, life *may* be possible, but outside of this zone life cannot exist, Figure 2.4.<sup>7</sup> As you can see, our Sun and the earth lie comfortably inside the GHZ. If our solar system were closer to the core, we would be destroyed by the extreme radiation emanating from it. If our solar system were above or below the plane of the galaxy, we would also be decimated by the core's radiation. The universe is mostly composed of hydrogen and helium, the lightest elements. The heavier elements (to astronomers, any element heavier than helium is a heavy element) are



<sup>6</sup> Stars have different ages just as trees and humans do. Stars were created on day four, but they have different life-cycles just as trees and humans, which were created on days three and six, respectively.

<sup>7</sup> Ross, Hugh; *Why The Universe Is The Way It Is*; 2008; Baker Books: LCN 2008020162.



rarer but exist in our location within the galaxy. Those elements do not exist in sufficient amounts closer to the core, so carbon-based life would not be possible.<sup>8 9 10 11 12</sup>

Not only does our solar system exist inside the GHZ, but our solar system is precisely located between major spiral arms. Human life could not exist within a spiral arm due to the radiation and gravitation effects. In addition, at just our precise position in the galaxy, the stars between the arms are moving at about the same speed as the arms—this means the arms have not crossed the earth in recorded history, which is a necessary condition for life to exist. So, our solar system is precisely located in a small, secluded, protected, habitable area within a huge, hostile galaxy. Our solar system is said to lie within the Goldilocks zone, that is, a small zone in a hostile universe where everything is just right for human life. All these factors unite to proclaim this cannot be a mere coincidence, but rather is clear evidence of the Creator's hand in providing a home for us. If He exercised all this care for our existence, He must have a purpose in mind.

Now we will move away from the galaxy, and look at a much smaller system: our solar system. Our solar system also has a habitable zone (see Figures 2.5 and 2.6). This small, circular zone is the only zone that will accommodate human life in relation to our Sun. Those planets that are closer, or further away, from the Sun do not have significant amounts of water in liquid form for life. The only planet in the habitable zone for our Sun is the earth. In addition to water in liquid form, our planet is strategically located among the other planets. The Sun and larger planets have much more mass than the earth, and correspondingly greater gravitational fields. The earth's location is such that these larger objects help shield the earth from asteroids by drawing them toward themselves due to their greater gravity. The Sun provides protection from asteroids on one side and the large planets (Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune) provide that protection from other direction, (see Figures 2.5 and 2.6). Another special protection we have is from deadly solar winds. The earth's core is mostly iron, which sets up a magnetic field around the earth. That field shields the earth from deadly solar winds that would otherwise kill us in minutes.<sup>13 14</sup>

These are only a few of the special precautions God has made for our earthly home. Our existence depends upon God's precise, fine-tuning of the universe so that life can exist. There are countless factors at work making life possible, or impossible. Each factor has a wide range of possible values; but on earth, each has been set at a specific level suitable for human life. Just slight changes would result in disaster for us; thus, scientists now see the incredible fine-tuning by God to make our world habitable for us. Again, even a tiny, minor change in any one of these factors would spell doom for humanity. The secular view would be that all these factors just happened to be at the right value on the earth, and that is why there is life here and not elsewhere. Christians believe the extra special care for our safety is provided by the hand of God, assuring a place to live and prosper, in a most inhospitable world.

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<sup>8</sup> Nicolson, Iain; *Dark Side of the Universe*; 2007; John Hopkins University Press; LCN 2006932326.

<sup>9</sup> Inglis, Mike; *Astrophysics is Easy*; 2007; Springer; LCN 2007925262.

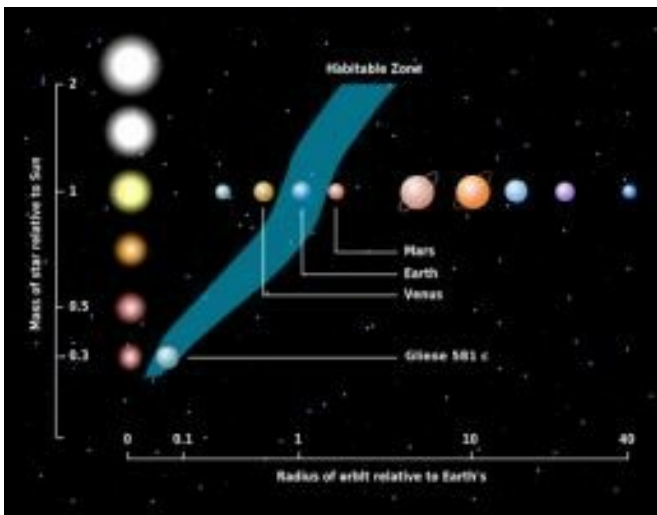
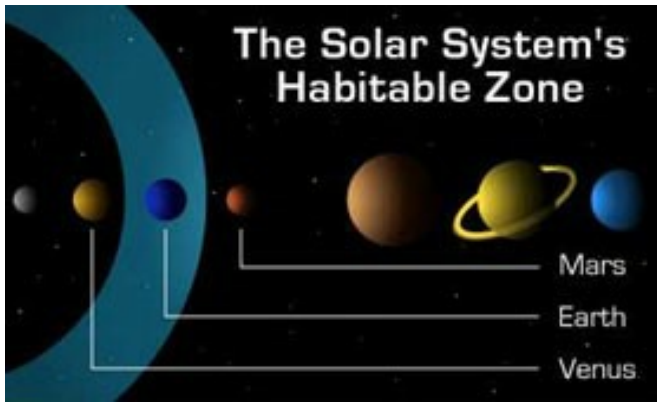
<sup>10</sup> Zeilik, Michael; *Astronomy*; 2002; Cambridge University Press; ISBN 0 521 80090-0.

<sup>11</sup> Rees, Martin; *Universe*; 2008; DK Publishing; ISBN 978-0-7566-3670-8.

<sup>12</sup> Allegre, Claude; *From Stone to Star, A View of Modern Geology*; 1992; Harvard University Press; ISBN 0-674-83867-x.

<sup>13</sup> Ross, Hugh; *Why The Universe Is The Way It Is*; 2008; Baker Books; LCN 2008020162.

<sup>14</sup> Allegre, Claude; *From Stone to Star, A View of Modern Geology*; 1992; Harvard University Press; ISBN 0-674-83867-x.



**Figures 2.5 and 2.6.** The habitable zone is shown in each figure. These two figures show the same thing, in different ways. For the Sun (the yellow star with a solar mass of 1), the earth is the only planet that lies within the habitable zone; no human life is possible outside this zone.

From the cosmic perspective, we see our galaxy is one of billions of galaxies and our Sun is a typical star. However, God has carefully placed our solar system very strategically within the galaxy, and just as carefully placed the earth within the solar system; in both cases, the placement is precisely where life can exist. From all we can learn by observing the universe, obviously a divine hand prepared a special place for us. From what we learn from the Bible, we realize the divine mind similarly prepared a special plan/purpose for the humans He would create to live on the earth. Thus, God clearly created the earth and universe for us, not vice versa.

What has been presented in this section is only a glimpse of what God did to prepare a home for us, so that His plan could take place. We are humbled and God is exalted by our appreciation of His actions on our behalf. Considering all He has done to

ensure a home for His plan to take place, can there be any doubt His spiritual plan for us is any less? His spiritual preparations for us are even more spectacular than those related to our earthly home. However, God's spiritual preparations for us come with a complex spiritual battle with Satan in which we seem to be caught in the middle. This battle is not because we are great, but because Satan wants to defile anything God plans to do. Since God has a plan for us, it is Satan's nature to defile it and bring it to ruin. Thus, God had a plan and prepared a home for us; however, He had to keep something a secret so that Satan could not defile His plan.

## Keeping Perspective

### The Loss of Perspective

The items discussed in this section may seem tangential to the main purpose of this book; however, we can learn a lot from human experiences of the past related to the subjects at hand. Our perspectives on sacred and scientific events, our interpretations of Scripture, and the value we place on scientific discoveries will be shown, in coming chapters, to be intricately related to what God is accomplishing in our Age. This is important, for the things God is accomplishing are related to why Satan could not know certain things too early in history.

From a historical perspective, it would seem logical to think that as humans discovered more and more of what God had done in the natural world, Christians would have seen how true discovery magnified the Lord. The Psalmist said; *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and firmament shows His handiwork.*

*Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard*" (Psa. 19:1-3). Unfortunately, many people think this Scripture must not apply today, and are reluctant to be enlightened by the truth revealed in the natural world. The natural world still speaks to us; as Romans 1:20 says, *"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse."* So, without doubt, we can learn about the attributes of the Lord, His power, the Godhead, and gain knowledge by observing the natural world because He is reflected in His handiwork.

In spite of what the Scripture says, the response of many Christians has been quite negative to the discoveries in the natural world. In many cases, the negativity results from perceived or actual attacks on the Bible by secular scientists. However, in attempting to defend the Bible, Christians inadvertently have caused just as much harm for Christianity. While some scientists have tried to discredit the Bible, others are believers. In the long-term, however, true scientific discoveries are not an attack on the Bible, but the discovery of what the Lord has done. Scientific discoveries are nothing more than learning from the book of nature, that is, discovery of what God has allowed us to learn in nature, the very work of His hands. Discoveries in nature are not inspired, as is the Bible, but neither are they an attack upon the Bible. Discoveries are often at odds with what we humans think the Bible is saying because human interpretations are often viewed as the Word itself: "This is what the Bible says and that is what I believe." Our interpretations are not the Word nor are they inspired; we just have a sad history of thinking they are.

As we look at just a few of the historic responses to scientific discoveries (related to our earthly home), we will see how people have tended to confuse the Bible's actual words with our interpretations, which are based upon our limited perspectives. Case in point, the Bible speaks of the Sun rising and setting; to the ancient mind that clearly meant the Sun moves and goes around the firmly set earth. When a heliocentric (sun-centered solar system) was presented, it caused outrage because such an idea meant the earth moved around the sun; this teaching clearly refuted Scripture and common experience. If there ever were anything so simple to see with our own eyes, and thereby proving our view to be correct, it was that the Sun rose and set. We can see it was the Sun that moved across the sky during the day, so how could any sane person think otherwise?

Galileo (1564-1642) confirmed Copernicus' (1473-1543) view that the Sun was the center of our solar system and the earth went around it, which meant the earth moved.<sup>15</sup> Both of these men were devout Catholics, but this teaching was considered heresy and raised questions of their fidelity to Scripture—heresy, because the Scriptures (Psalms 93:1, 96:10, 104:5) say the world, "... *cannot be moved.*" Biblical statements about a world that cannot be moved, and sunrise and sunset, seemed sufficient to close the case on this heresy. However, the strong stance of Christians was based upon human errors in interpretation. Actually, the Bible teaches the earth is fastened upon nothing (Job 38:4-6, 26:7). When the Bible says the world cannot be moved, it is referring (correctly interpreted) to the stability of the created order; which means no one can make the earth move from its designated course.<sup>16</sup>

Misinterpretations are hard to change; for some people, a change implies a weakening of the faith. We admire those who stand firm to their faith in the face of doom, as in Hebrews 11. However, we sometimes stand firm on an issue in a desire to be true to the Word, when in reality we are being just the opposite. As examples of the latter, in the sixteenth century, Luther is quoted as saying of Copernicus,

<sup>15</sup> Schroeder, Gerald; *The Science of God*; 2009; First Free Press; ISBN 978-1-4391-2958-6.

<sup>16</sup> Collins, John; *Science & Faith, Friends or Foes?*; 2003; Crossway Books; LCN 2003004799.

"This fool wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy, but sacred Scripture tells us...." John Wesley (1703-1791) said that the Copernican system "tends to infidelity." The Roman Catholic Church found such beliefs worthy of death.<sup>17</sup> However, with the test of time, further discovery, and considerable debate, the heliocentric view was proven correct and people accepted it. A change in human perspective helped people realize the apparent movement of the Sun was in reality due to a rotating earth.

The question is, did the discovery of the earth's rotation and/or revolutions around the Sun really refute Scripture or our interpretations of it? The answer is obvious. Thus, today we can read our Bibles and not be one bit bothered by the fact it is the earth that is turning, making sunrise and sunset, and the earth revolves around the Sun causing the seasons. In addition, we find no conflict with the idea of our planet being hung in space, moving in an orbit, and not fastened to anything. The truth of a heliocentric solar system never did deny Scripture; the truth opened our understanding of the natural world and in the process exalted and glorified the Lord. In like fashion, as we understand His special care in the creation of our natural home, we appreciate more and more the care and wisdom of God. Even more astounding is the fact that a better understanding of His redemptive plan creates a new, broader, more appreciative view of God.

Plato (428-347 BC) was not an astronomer, but his teaching influenced astronomy for 2,000 years.<sup>18</sup> Plato taught there was a first principle, known as the perfection of the heavens, which meant the heavens represented perfection. Once a principle is recognized as true, whatever is logically derived from that principle must be equally true. Everyone knew the most perfect geometrical form was the sphere; therefore, the perfect heavens must be made of spheres and objects (planets) in the heavens must rotate at constant speeds, and be carried around in perfect circles. Long after Plato, church leaders still believed this first principle as though it were biblical. Having grudgingly accepted the sun-centered solar system, they were aghast when it was said the planets had elliptical orbits and travelled at different speeds. Again, there was nothing in the Bible about the first principle, so the requirement of perfect circular orbits was a man-made invention of what they wanted perfection to mean. In essence, the perfection argument was an attempt to make God in our image, that is, to define God by what we think He ought to be, based upon our simple understanding.

Discoveries around Columbus's time did not make life easier for theologians, since the discoveries indicated the earth was a sphere, not a flat slab.<sup>19</sup> Wait a minute. The Holy Bible says, "... *four angels standing at the four corners of the earth...*," and spheres do not have corners. So, this clearly proves the earth is flat (Rev 7:1). We now know the Bible is really referring to the four basic directions of a compass, not the shape of the earth (Isa. 40:22).<sup>20</sup> In Columbus's day, the debate going back to Augustine's time (354-430 AD) was revived. Augustine was skeptical of the sphericity of the Earth. In fact, he was hostile to the idea there might be antipodes (people on the other side of the globe who walked with their feet diametrically opposed to ours).<sup>21</sup> <sup>22</sup> In time, theologians had to admit that the earth was not at all what they thought; the problem was their misinterpretation of Scriptures. Theolo-

<sup>17</sup> Mention of theologians and a church is not meant to be derogatory. Mention is used to represent the typical opinions of Christians at that time; we would have most likely held similar beliefs.

<sup>18</sup> Seeds, Michael and Backman, Dana; *Stars and Galaxies*; Brooks/Cole; Eighth Edition; 2013.

<sup>19</sup> By the time of Columbus, educated people generally knew the earth was spherical, but they did not know how large it was (15). The acceptance of the shape of the earth seems to have taken longer in common circles.

<sup>20</sup> Morris, Henry; *The Genesis Record*; 1976; Baker Book House; 76-2265.

<sup>21</sup> Young, David; *The Bible, Rocks and Time*; 2008; IVP Academic; LCN 2008017282.

<sup>22</sup> Ross, Hugh; *The Fingerprint of God*; 1989; Whitaker House; ISBN 0-88368-627-9.

gians eventually came to understand we are not the center of the universe, and, from a worldly perspective, we may not even be all that important.

Later in time, scientists had the gall to say our solar system was not in the center of the Milky Way galaxy. That meant we humans were off center. Not being the center of the galaxy relegated our home to a secondary status, so it seemed. Scientists like Edwin Hubble, with the aid of Henrietta Leavitt, eventually found there was a much larger universe beyond the Milky Way, and our galaxy shrank in comparison.<sup>23</sup> Eventually, the Milky Way was found to be just one galaxy among billions in the universe. Scientists then said our galaxy was not in the center of the universe, and it was not even the largest galaxy. Such discoveries made people fear the Bible was under continued scientific attack. Due to such scientific discoveries, our earthly home became seemingly insignificant and science became the enemy of many since it supposedly challenged the Bible. The battle between science and the Bible continues to this day, and many Christians wonder if they always have to concede to science. They do not have to concede anything except wrong opinions on what they think the Bible says.

### Regaining Perspective

Today we readily accept the fact the earth rotates and goes around the Sun, the solar system is not the center of the Milky Way, and many other galaxies exist outside the Milky Way. Do any of these findings in any way lessen God's majesty? Not one bit. However, such findings help us realize there are good reasons for everything God did. The correct perspective on what the Scripture is truly saying is liberating. When our minds are set free from the former chains of oppressive misunderstandings, we can correctly see God and His works. Discovery enhances our appreciation of God, for we see Him as He is, not how we would like Him to be. He and His works are clearly larger and more magnificent than humans every imagined, and scientific discoveries have only magnified Him (the author of the written Word, and the creator of the natural world). Our estimation of God grows exponentially through scientific discovery.

The point being made is simple: our beliefs, interpretations, and opinions can be dead wrong even though intended to show respect for God. Such beliefs can end up making God small, that is, creating in our minds a diminutive appreciating and understanding of His full essence. The Bible contains more information than we ever dreamed, and knowing more of the Bible really makes us see Him with new and more appreciative eyes. Just as true scientific discoveries do not deny or subvert the Bible, discovering the intent of a passage of Scripture can increase our concept of God and create an appreciation for Him that is unparalleled. We know that scientific discoveries about the universe have not made God less; instead, they have made God's creation immensely larger, much more complex, and incredibly intriguing—creating a concept of God much larger than before.

Scientific discoveries do not last long if they are false; thus, they cannot survive if they deny the truth of the Bible. Theological errors and misinterpretations seem to take much longer to correct. Our interpretations of the Word can be challenged, if scientific discoveries are made that transcend human beliefs of the day. True science does not relegate God's work or compromise His person; instead, it exalts Him as we learn more and more of the infinite detail, design, and function of His handiwork. The discovery of the atomic world, mysterious black matter and energy, DNA, the genome ... only exalt our Lord. Truth has that effect. Whereas, man-made theology, which purports to know God's mind and how His plans must operate, relegate Him to our restricted image—a small God with finite plans.

<sup>23</sup> Bartusiak, Marcia; *The Day We Found the Universe*; Pantheon Books a division of Random House, Inc.; 2009.

Our interpretations of what the Bible says can be revised as we study the Word and as we gain a true perspective of what it is saying. Perhaps we have to be a bit iconoclastic in nature, challenging cherished beliefs, in order to understand new concepts. The goal of this book is to help provide an appreciation and a renewed perspective on our text (1 Corinthians 2). The desire is to help the reader gain perspective of all God has done in our universe, creating a home for us, and revealing His top secret at just the right time. Just as Heaven is high above the earth, so are God's ways higher than ours (Isa. 55:9). Our study will discover more and more of God's perfect plan for humanity, and through that discovery we will see His perfection. As we learn what God has done for us, especially for us in the Age of Grace (today), we must humbly proclaim the unsurpassable wisdom of God in making our Salvation possible.

A small universe, as envisioned centuries ago, resulted in a small concept of God, which was never any Christian's desire. One way we gain true perspective of God is through the discoveries of science; the immensity and complexity of the universe creates in us a larger perspective of God, beyond comprehension. The main way we gain a true perspective of God is by knowing what His Word truly teaches. That is where we are headed as we move toward understanding His eternal plan. As we learn from the Word and scientific discoveries, we can snicker at some of the interpretations Christians had in the past and thought were important. Notice the reversal from the past, that is, if we were to promote a flat earth today, people would not believe the Bible. If Christians today believed the Sun went around the earth, that interpretation would drive people away from Christianity. Ultimately, false interpretations backfire and do harm; therefore, we have to wonder what we are promoting today that is just an opinion, which someday will drive people away from the Lord. Things have not changed all that much today (from the examples we have considered). We now have a new set of cherished interpretations that any true, orthodox Christian must believe. So, what was true in the past concerning human pride is true today but wears different clothes.

### **Perspective on Significance**

The discussion above points to the fact our earth is not the center of the solar system, the galaxy, or the universe. We see how silly and misdirected the arguments of old were, as believers tried to defend their view of the Bible. The Bible remained true, in fact, becomes even more credible, with scientific discoveries. What have often proven to be suspect and wrong are human interpretations of the Bible. Our discussion has shown how ridiculous any of us can be, while at the same time thinking we are upholding Scripture. A call to humility and a reexamination of Scripture is always apropos. Over the years, we have learned that the universe is far larger and more complex than ever imagined. However, discovery has only glorified God by revealing His unfathomable wisdom, preparation, and care for humans.

The old beliefs of human significance somehow being related to our position in the universe are just plain incorrect. In fact, God has never made human significance a factor; it seems to be our wish. We recall this is exactly the case with the nation of Israel. God chose that nation for a special relationship (the chosen nation), but not because they were something special. In fact, He chose them because they were just the opposite, the least of all people. Israel was an insignificant people in number, power, political importance, and land (Deut. 7:6-7, 32:10; Ezek. 16:2-6). So, it dawns upon us that we may be insignificant in many ways, but that has nothing to do with the eternal purpose, which depends upon who He is and what He has chosen to do. God is the God of all, especially the weak, the nobodies, and the insignificant of this world. We rejoice that the real issue is who we are based upon God's purpose and desire, not our place in the universe.

## Addendum to Chapter 2

### The Bible and Discovery

This addendum is provided for those readers who may want more information on the topic of the Bible and science.

Natural discoveries have challenged accepted and cherished beliefs of the Bible's teachings. Believers and theologians have been alarmed with such discoveries, and have defended the Bible by claiming those who believe such things were heretics. Some scientists were, and are, set against Scripture; but if any discovery is incorrect, it will be shown to be so over time and with further analysis. Too often Christians today and in the past, defend their beliefs by saying those who disagree with them do not believe in the inspiration of Scripture, do not believe what the Bible says, do not believe in Christ's substitutionary death, and are most likely not Christians. This scenario has been played over and over during the centuries: "If you don't believe as we teach, you most likely are not saved." The author has been the subject of such totally ungodly behavior; it is painful, humiliating, and completely unnecessary. With rare exceptions, legitimate scientific discoveries have ended up glorifying God and making Him much larger (in our understanding).

A very limited list of scientific discoveries is shown below. The discoveries flow from the past to the present and are based upon what has been discussed concerning cosmology. These scientific discoveries were originally thought to be anti-scriptural, and those who believed them were considered heretics.

1. The earth is a sphere, with people on the other side whose feet point toward us.
2. The Sun is the center of our solar system; the earth rotates around it and revolves.
3. Planets and stars have elliptical orbits and move at different speeds due to gravitation.
4. Stars are not attached to a dome over the earth; they exist in space at different distances from the earth.
5. The solar system is not the center of our galaxy.
6. Other galaxies exist beyond our galaxy; our galaxy is just one of billions.
7. Stars and galaxies have different ages, just as do humans and trees.
8. The size of the universe is beyond comprehension.

The intent of this Addendum is to show how important natural discoveries have been, while recognizing natural discoveries are minor issues compared to what will be discussed in coming chapters. Considering the scientific discoveries noted above, we now have to consider various questions related to the effect of these discoveries.

- Did these scientific discoveries cause unbelief as predicted, or were God-fearing Christians the ones castigated and imprisoned for making the scientific discoveries?

- Were people turned away from faith by the scientific discoveries discussed, or were unbelievers drawn to the truth as the hand and mind of the Creator were revealed?
- Was the inspiration of Scripture really denied by true discoveries, or were incorrect interpretations of the Bible overturned?
- Did legitimate scientific discovery actually expand our thinking, causing us to see God in a much larger framework and leading to a more correct understanding of the Bible?
- Where would Christianity be today if we still followed the former beliefs that scientific discoveries replaced? By the way, this is no small issue, for the expansion of Christianity over the centuries is closely related to true discoveries.
- Did a small universe and tightly restricted beliefs result in a small concept of God?

Today there are countless scientific discoveries that Christians get confused about and that cause fear. We have only briefly considered astronomy/cosmology, and have not broached the important topics in geology, paleontology, biology, genetics, archeology, anthropology, and the life sciences. We have cherished views today that, in many cases, hinder us from considering God in new and expanded ways. The Word never changes, it is inspired, and it is true in every aspect; however, the Word does not discuss everything. We often read things into the Word so we can support our beliefs. The issue is, do we need to be concerned when we hear new ideas, for example, in the astronomic field, such as: black matter and energy, black holes, supernova, neuclogenesis (heavier elements being formed in stars today), or the big bang? Absolutely not. We have nothing to fear, for discovery is nothing more than learning what God has done. Sometimes new discoveries are not true discoveries, and, as such, they will not stand the test of time; they will be replaced as research proceeds. If we worry that science is constantly attacking the Bible, maybe we ought to ask if it is the Bible that is under attack or our interpretations of the Bible. We do not need to think we have to defend the Word; God handles that very well. We neither have to believe new discoveries nor do we have to adopt them quickly; but, it is not good to act like flat-earthers, clinging to the past and refusing to consider new concepts and discoveries. What we do need to hold fast to are the critical spiritual truths of the Bible; those truths are not as much assailed by science as by human pride, need for power, speaking lies in hypocrisy, and so forth, as shown in 1 Timothy 4:1-3 and 2 timothy 3:1-5.

Below are four websites dealing with the Bible and science, covering a wide range of topics and biblical views. Most people will not like all four sites and may find one or two offensive (depending upon personal viewpoints). However, it does not hurt to see if you can discover today's cherished beliefs, supposedly based upon the Bible. We often establish these beliefs as proof of what a person must believe in order to be a true Christian.

1. <https://answersingenesis.org/creationism/arguments-to-avoid/> This site helps substantiate the fact our interpretations often are wrong and cause harm to the truth. See the section entitled *Arguments Christians Shouldn't Use*. Some arguments we should not use are: the second law of thermodynamics began at the fall, giant skeletons have been discovered, and there was no rain before the Fall.
2. <http://paleo.cc/paluxy.htm> is the best site from reputable sources to familiarize yourself with the issue of dinosaur and human footprint in the same rock strata. This site also has a host of other information most Christians will want to read.



3. <http://www.godandscience.org/apologetics/model.html> has a lot of great information that is scholarly and may stretch traditional thinking.

4. <http://www.reasons.org/> presents scholarly information from Christian scientists, providing great insights.



## PART 2

Remote and Recent Past:

Monsters and Revealed Truth  
God's Mystery  
A New Age



## CHAPTER THREE

# Eyes Have Seen, Ears Have Heard

Everyone hears only what he understands.  
*(Johann Wolfgang von Goethe)*

### Introduction

*... that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the age for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love him.' But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit, For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man expect the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. (1 Cor. 2:5-11).*

In Chapter 2, the discussion was intended to show God's preparations for us in an inhospitable universe are more than we can imagine; even more spectacular are His plans for us in the spiritual realm. When we ponder all He has done, and is doing, we realize His spiritual plans are beyond our full understanding. One reason His spiritual plans are hard to grasp is they are inextricably complicated by the battle between Satan and God. Human minds can barely comprehend the spiritual battle taking place; but we know that the battle rages and Satan is determined to undermine and destroy anything God plans to do. Since God has a plan for us, Satan's nature is to do whatever he can to oppose it.

The spiritual battle between God and Satan is pertinent to our text. Prior to jumping into the text, a little recapitulation of what we have discussed may help focus our thoughts. We have seen that before creation began, God already had a predetermined plan for the humans He would create. Part of His plan had to be kept a mystery, hidden from everyone, even the angels. The plan existed during the time Satan was the anointed Cherub in Heaven (Ezek. 28:14-16), ensuring the sanctity and holiness of the throne of God. God knew there was no way Satan, while serving as the anointed Cherub, could get a hint of this mystery because he would fall from his position and carry that knowledge with him. The reason for keeping part of the plan a mystery is clear, that is, if the rulers of this age, including Satan, had known

of it, they would have made sure Christ did not die. We have not touched on the significance of an un-crucified Christ, but the central theme of God's plan was that Christ had to be crucified. So, in order to ensure that happened, He had to keep a secret. We will see the secret was not that Christ had to be crucified, that was well revealed in Scripture—hardly hidden. There was something else that had to be kept a secret, so that the rulers would crucify Christ.

In the verses above, Isaiah knew there was an afterlife, but did not know all he wanted to know about it; thus, the statement about, *'Eye has not seen....'*<sup>1</sup> Paul quotes Isaiah, not to say he was uninformed of the same things as Isaiah, but to let us know that God had kept something hidden right up to the time of the Apostle Paul. What was hidden, according to Paul, related to God's wisdom. Of course, the all-wise God knew the need for secrecy in order for His plan to succeed; therefore, the body of truth hidden within the mystery was not made known to anyone, in any age.<sup>2</sup> While Isaiah knew there was an afterlife, no one had a clue a secret existed in God's mind. In the cases of Isaiah and Paul, God did reveal the truths when it was appropriate to do so. Thus, Paul says, *"But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit"* (1Cor. 2:7a).

As we begin to go deeper into His plan, human interpretations of what the mystery may be are subject to the same constraining influences that held humans back from accepting true scientific discoveries. The desire here is to consider the verses above and correctly interpret them in order to gain a true perspective of God and His plan. When correctly interpreted and the true perspective of the Word is understood, then our minds are freed of the misinterpretations that constrained them.

### Completely Hidden Then Fully Revealed

Each of us has most likely heard Bible speakers and writers refer to 1 Corinthians 2:9 to explain that God's preparations for us in Heaven are unbelievable and beyond explanation. *"But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.' "* When any of us tries to describe the greatness of God or His plans for us, we soon are at a loss for words, even ideas, on what to say; instead, we resort to this verse as our rescue. We are sure God has made preparations for us that are inconceivable and beyond our understanding; using this verse seems the right thing to do. We presume this verse gives us a legitimate excuse for not knowing certain things. After all, how could we know about Heaven, if God has not revealed that information? We rationalize that our loss of words is the result of God's actions, perhaps even lack of action. While we have not seen or heard of the fullness of His preparations for us, our consolation is this verse, supposedly teaching God's preparations for us are extraordinary, beyond anything we have ever imagined.

Several years ago my family and I were attending a large church in Louisville, Kentucky. The pastor was speaking about eternal life and what Heaven would be like, but he soon ran out of ways to explain what lies ahead for the Christian. The streets of gold, no pain or suffering, playing with lions, and being with God are all wonderful thoughts; certainly none of us really knows all we wish about the future. We

<sup>1</sup> Vine, W.E.; An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words; Fleming H. Revell Company, Old Tappan, NJ.

<sup>2</sup> The reference to the rulers of this age will be discussed later. The word age is often translated world (kjv). The reference to an age is not to a specific period of time, with a starting and stopping point, but to a general timeframe. W. E. Vine notes the word used for age has an indefinite duration, and is viewed in relation to what takes place in that period. The force attaching to the word is not so much the length of the period, but the moral and spiritual characteristics of that period, in this case of the wisdom of the world. Satan is the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4), referred to as the present evil age (Gal. 1:4), because he is followed by more people than the real God. The Age of Grace and the present evil age coexist.

often wish the Bible explained more about Heaven. Describing Heaven and the afterlife can uplift and encourage believers, and is a means of drawing unbelievers to consider eternity, perhaps in a new light. Since the pastor was unable to describe the future, he resorted to 1 Corinthians 2:9; what could be more fitting? Most Christians think that quoting this verse gets them off the hook for not knowing something because it is unknowable, and this verse proves it.

There is a distinct tendency to stop at the end of verse nine, after making the point that we do not know much more, and supposedly rightfully so, because God has not revealed any more. We reason that we cannot know what God has chosen to keep secret. However, we are assured the unrevealed things of God are beyond anything we have seen or heard—in fact, beyond anything our hearts could imagine. This is no doubt true, but there is one little problem: this verse is not teaching about Heaven. After the pastor ended his quote of verse nine, and continued talking, my wife and I leaned toward each other and whispered, "But." We were not trying to be disrespectful; we just wished he continued teaching the Word. Notice the very next verse: *"But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God"* (1 Cor. 2:10). Whatever the unseen things are, whatever the unheard things entail, whatever constitute the things of the heart, those very things were revealed to the Apostle Paul and his fellows. Those things were one truth in Isaiah's day and a different truth in Paul's day; but the idea of the text is that God does reveal needed truth in His time. This changes everything; reading verse ten means there are things in the Word that were previously unseen, formerly unheard, and in the past not knowable, but by the first century, they were recorded in the Word. Now, we have to figure out what Paul means when he says there were things formerly unknown, but revealed to him.

### **Monsters, Isaiah, and Paul**

The monster story you are about to read provides a good analogy of our text, explaining our topic in a different, and hopefully understandable way. While talking about monsters may seem pretty foolish, this discussion can be a useful learning tool. Thus, monster-talk is not a tangent with no point, but a discussion to show how our interpretations of events can be wrong, and how an apropos story can help us understand the biblical text in question. If you want to read the entire monster story please see "The Garr Monster Exists," Teen Lesson 28, at [www.grace4you.com](http://www.grace4you.com)

This is a true monster story going back to 1959, when my parents bought a farm in western Wisconsin; I was a teenager at the time. The farm was in a remote area and in a primitive condition; there was no electricity or indoor plumbing. The farm had been abandoned for many years. This area of Wisconsin, USA, was not glaciated (the later glaciers went around this area). The land is very rugged, with hills and valleys that are mostly wooded. This area is sparsely populated and an ideal place for many wild animals.

One spring evening, probably in 1960, my father and I were outside at dusk. All of a sudden, we heard an eerie animal sound, something we had never heard. We had no clue what it was. I heard this sound only one or two times in the early '60s; my dad heard it several times. The sound did not seem to be a growl, bark, howl, or screech, but a loud sound uttered only once and then the animal would run away. It sounded like something was snorting-out a "garr" or caw sound. No animal we knew made this sound. We checked with local farmers and animal experts, no one had a clue what the animal might be. We knew there were no monsters; after all, it was 1960.

One time my father heard the sound at night; based upon the noise the animal made when it ran through the woods, he concluded it was large and fast. Wildcat Mountain was not too far away, so our best

thinking was that the animal was probably a wildcat (bobcat), bear, or cougar. Jokingly, we began to call whatever made this sound the Garr Monster, hoping some day to find out what it was. Was this some unknown animal that migrated to this area to survive the glacial age(s), or had it always existed in this remote area? In the late 1960s the silent years came in which the monster was not heard again, decade after decade. Had the species died out in the 1960s after surviving for thousands of years? We kidded about the monster, but rarely mentioned it to others. In the 1970s and early 1980s, we did not speak of it much, lest we scare my kids or their cousins; after all, going to an outhouse at night is pretty scary for a kid, even with Mom or Dad. By the mid 1980s, indoor plumbing allowed us to speak freely of the monster. Of course, we embellished the story, and the monster became our myth; it had glowing red eyes, huge fangs, iron claws, and belched fire. It, no doubt, ate wolves for breakfast and picked its teeth with bear claws. We all knew better, but we still had no clue what the mystery animal was.

In 2011, some 51 years after first hearing the monster, I was building a cabin on a parcel of the land my parents bought in 1959. The cabin is on the edge of a small open field with forest behind and on the side. I had not thought of the monster for decades, and my dad had been dead for many years; it seemed this monster was an ancient memory. One night in the spring, around three AM, I was outside looking at the stars (this area has little light from farms or cities, so the stars are clearly visible). That night the stars were exceptionally vivid, making true the old saying, "They seemed so close that I could almost touch them." It was a very peaceful night with no moon and total silence—just me and the stars God had created.

All of sudden, the peace was shattered by a spooky sound. The sound scared me, causing me to jump and my heart to race. It came from the woods over 300 feet away, so I knew I was safe, yet I found myself edging toward the cabin door. Then, whatever made the noise started running through the woods, thankfully, away from me; it was clearly a large animal by the sound of the crashing and thrashing, but I saw nothing. When I got inside, I made sure the door was locked, twice, and went to bed. I could not sleep that night as events raced through my mind. It dawned on me that this was the Garr Monster that I had heard 51 years ago. Not only was the Monster still alive, but it was right here!

I would go to the cabin and work for two days each week, spending the evenings on the porch reading. Oftentimes a female deer would come down a path with her fawn, and I would watch them graze. I had to sit perfectly still because if I moved they would run. Such peace and tranquility. One morning, a few weeks after hearing the Garr monster, I had just begun working inside the cabin when I heard it again: **Garr!** This time it was broad daylight and right outside the cabin. I ran to the kitchen window and looked, with my heart jumping out of my chest. This time I knew I would actually get to see it! I would finally find out what had been a mystery to my dad and me. The first thing I saw was a female deer running down the grass driveway, and she seemed to be running oddly. I wondered if she had been hurt by the monster. The monster had to be right behind her, chasing her, but my view was obstructed and I could not see very far behind her. This was my chance at last. Was it a cougar, bear, or a monster?

I watched for a couple seconds waiting to see the animal chasing her, but nothing appeared. Then, in a flash, I was overwhelmed with the thought that the monster was not chasing the doe because it had caught her fawn. I raced to the door and ran outside with my hammer in hand. If the monster had the fawn, at least I could throw my hammer at it and try to scare it away. When I got outside, I looked quickly and frantically for the monster in the area where I saw the doe, but it was not there. I looked left, right, back, sideways, ran around to make sure I got every view. I looked for moving tall weeds and branches, resulting from the monster running through them, but nothing was moving. There was no monster to be found, anywhere. I was absolutely dumbfounded.



I may be old, but I am not totally crazy, yet. I heard the garr sound, saw the doe fleeing, but could not find the monster; how can that be? How could it just disappear? I went back into the cabin completely perplexed. Slowly but surely, after all the years, the truth began to emerge. The answer was so simple it was almost unbelievable. My dad and I had it all wrong. I was embarrassed by how I had misconstrued events. The garr sound did not come from a monster at all; it came from the doe. The doe that made the sound had a fawn, and the garr was an alarm call to warn the fawn (and other deer) of danger. My guess is that when she made the garr sound the fawn dropped down in the tall grass and remained perfectly still. She provided a decoy to draw the danger toward her (by making noise and running oddly) and away from the fawn. Similarly, other animals feign an injury to draw predators away from their young. The sound is a survival mechanism to protect the young. She made the sound out of fear and a desire to protect her fawn. I slept well that night.

Now I realized why we heard this sound mostly in the spring because that is when deer have fawn. That is why they make so much noise running through the woods; they want to make noise to draw attention to themselves and away from their fawns. Who was the real monster causing fear? I was! I scared the deer the first time by moving around late at night and the second time by making a sudden loud noise in the cabin. The doe was not used to my being at the cabin, so any noise inside would scare her. Similarly, deer were not used to humans being at the farm back in the early '60s; thus, we scared them. In their fear, they blurted out a garr sound.<sup>3</sup> All the years of silence at the farm were the result of having dogs, cows, and farm activity; the deer were well aware of human presence. The terrible, evil, Garr Monster was nothing but a doe. Mystery solved after 51 years. However, this story points out that my dad and I both had wrongly interpreted the facts, and it took 51 years to figure it out.

Now, back to Paul and Isaiah in I Corinthians 2:9. By way of analogy, my dad represents Isaiah, and my involvement can be likened to believers or the disciples. My dad never did get to know the truth, but by being at the right place at the right time, I did learn the truth. Similarly, Isaiah never did get to know all that he wanted about the afterlife. However, that was revealed to the disciples and twelve Apostles by Jesus Christ, as Isaiah prophesied (Isa. 52:14-15). They got to see Him, hear Him, and have their hearts filled with the truth they had always wanted. He came that they might know. Jesus Christ said, *"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (Jn. 8:32). Matthew 13:11 and Luke 8:10 make it clear the unbelievers were still blind and deaf to the truth, by choice, but not believers.

My dad could say as Isaiah did, that no eye had seen, no ear had heard (no person told him what the monster was), nor had anyone had their heart enlightened about the identity of the monster. At first, I could have said the same thing. Now that I know the truth, having seen, heard, and understood, I cannot say what my father used to say. Today, I cannot claim there is something unknown out there, because it has been revealed to me.

In the past, believers could have said the same thing as Isaiah. When Christ came in the flesh, they saw, heard, and had their hearts touched. The information Isaiah lacked, they received. They could no longer claim the lack of understanding expressed by Isaiah. Similarly, no one today can honestly say that God has not revealed all the truth needed for a person's life.

Now let's expand this analogy by introducing two more characters. The story from this point is purely fictional. The first new character is a reclusive old man with failing eyes. Even though his eyes are

<sup>3</sup>Now, having heard the deer's distress call many times, it is apparent the deer may utter the sound more than once, even stomp the ground to intimidate the intruder. The sound is not so much a garr sound as a hew or haw sound. The sound can best be described as a very forceful exhale, similar to how we sound when we shout "Hey" when we try to alert someone of danger. The sound alerts other deer and perhaps scares off an intruder. Even when you know what the sound is, it can be a bit unnerving at night if the deer is close by.

failing, he can see, discern, a person's true character. This old man has lived in the area of the farm all his life; his family has owned a huge farm next to ours since record keeping began. The second new character is the old man's father, now deceased, so we are really going back in time. The old man's father, referred to as "father" from here on, told the old man he had kept a secret from everyone, since the late 1800s. The father revealed this truth to the old man, and him alone, when he thought it appropriate to do so. The father's secret was that there were Bigfoot (Sasquatch) living on his farm. The father had kept this secret because if the truth were known before the right time, he knew naturalists, hunters, Bigfoot enthusiasts, and government researchers would have driven them to extinction. The old man showed me pictures and provided all the evidence needed to prove he was telling the truth. But why tell me this secret, and why now? The old man said his father revealed the truth to him years ago because the time was right; now the old man wanted me to know because he discerned that I would be a good steward of this secret and help protect the Bigfoot.

This analogy may prove to be too involved for many readers, but consider giving it a try. In this analogy, with many obvious weaknesses, the old man represents Paul, the old man's father represents God, my dad represents Isaiah, and I represent believers. My dad (Isaiah) never knew the truth about the Garr Monster, but I (believers) did learn the truth later. At this point, there is a large gap in the story as it switches from the Garr Monster to the Bigfoot story. This gap represents the time period between Isaiah and Paul. Now, the discussion switches from Garr Monster to Bigfoot. The father (God) revealed the secret of the Bigfoot to the old man (Paul) at the right time, and the old man told me (believers of today). The secret of the Bigfoot had to be kept to preserve the father's plan to save them. Similarly, God's secret was kept hidden until the correct time, so that the plan to save us could take effect.

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*God kept a secret to ensure Christ's death, so that His plan  
to save us could come to fruition.*

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Because the analogy above is not the easiest to understand, it will be stated a bit differently. Isaiah never knew much of the afterlife, but what Isaiah wished to know, the disciples did learn from Jesus during His life on earth. Similarly, my dad could have used Isaiah's words about not seeing, hearing (he heard something, but it was unknown), or perceiving the truth of the Garr Monster. In the past, I could have used those words too, but no longer, because the truth of the Garr Monster was revealed to me. In the extended analogy, originally the old man (Paul) could have use Isaiah's words in relation to the Bigfoot, saying, "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has entered into the heart of man the creatures of God's creation." After his father (God) revealed the truth of the Bigfoot, the old man would have to say, "But, my father has revealed it to me." It is important to realize, both my dad (Isaiah) and the old man (Paul) can use the exact same words (Isaiah's words) about not understanding something, but the two of them are referring to two different times and two different events.

From this analogy, we see Isaiah and Paul were using the same verses (about the eye not seeing, and the ear not hearing, etc.) in relation to different truths. What Isaiah was referring to, was revealed later, in God's due time, to the disciples by Jesus Christ. Paul would use the same passage to refer a hidden truth no one knew in previous ages. However, Paul clearly says he was given that secret truth(s), *"But God has revealed them to us,"* so he testifies to the fact he saw, heard, and experienced a truth never known to man before. God told Paul the secret at just the right time, and Paul told us. Isaiah and Paul use the same

Scripture to teach that God speaks to mankind in various ways at various times (Heb. 1:1-2). Thus, First Corinthians is telling us things we should know because they have been revealed to us by God.

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*First Corinthians 2:9-10 is not a text telling us what we cannot know,  
but what we should know.*

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Paul is not using these verses in relation to Heaven's glory or the afterlife; instead, the verses are addressing an even more hidden and important topic. The topic is seen in the preceding verses and is one of the most astounding in the Bible. The topic Paul is addressing is not about Heaven; it is about a secret that could have prevented the Crucifixion—the very basis of our Salvation. Eye had not seen, ear had not heard, and hearts had not perceived of a secret kept hidden by God; but then it was fully revealed to Paul.

*"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:7-8).* The apostle Paul is saying that God kept something a mystery (a secret) from the beginning of the world, hidden from the rulers of this age (the earthly rulers and Satan). The hidden wisdom (mystery) is God's plan and purpose for us, and that was revealed to Paul: *"but God has revealed it unto us."* If that mystery had been known, the rulers would not have crucified Christ, and as nice as that may sound at first hearing, it would have been a disaster for all mankind. If Christ had not been crucified, not one human being that has ever lived would be saved, not one would go to Heaven. So, it would make no difference what Heaven is like (Isaiah) because none of us would ever get there.

The part of this passage, nearly ignored by expositors, is what was it that the rulers of this age did not know, the ignorance of which allowed them to crucify Christ? What knowledge were they missing that would have made them take a complete change in direction? You see, the text is not at all addressing the afterlife or Heaven, but the Crucifixion and Salvation.

As a reminder, the purpose of this book is to: 1) discuss this mysterious wisdom of God, which was revealed to the Apostle Paul, and 2) explore the reasons why the rulers of this age would not have crucified Christ had they known of this mystery. Again, why were they so willing to crucify Him when they did? What exactly did they not know, which if they had known, would have completely reversed their actions? We will endeavor to explain exactly what God had to keep secret from Satan and humans *so that they would crucify Christ*. The crucifixion is not the mystery; it was well prophesied and well known, so it was hardly a secret. Although revealed, it was not well accepted, even by the twelve Apostles at first. But it was not a mystery. No, the mystery was not that Christ had to die; however, as we will see, the Cross is the pivotal matter in this topic.

### **What a Biblical Mystery Is**

The common interpretation of 1 Corinthians 2:9 follows this line of thinking. The Jewish rulers did not understand Christ was the Messiah. If they had understood who Jesus was, they would not have crucified their own Messiah. They thought He was an imposter, so crucifying Him was the right thing to do. They were blinded by the god of this age, Satan, from understanding the truth (2 Cor. 4:4). This interpretation is in accordance with Matthew: *"And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you*

*will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them' "* (Matt. 13:14-15, based upon Isa. 6:9-10).

The common interpretation contends the non-believing population did not know or understand revealed truth. This interpretation is true to a point, then falters. It falters by not properly recognizing the believers did grasp the truth: *" 'But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it' "* (Matt. 13:16-17). Jesus Christ was very specific that the long-sought truth was being made known by Him in such a way that people did get to see, hear, and know the Holy One, *" 'I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. And if anyone hears My words and does not believe.... ' "* (Jn. 12:46-47a). Thus, Isaiah's lack of understanding about the coming Messiah was no long hidden by God; by the time of the Gospel record it was fully revealed. The common interpretation falls short because the words of Jesus Christ teach the truth was made known, even though the general populous (especially the religious rulers) did not want to believe that truth. While Isaiah did not know all he wished, he makes it clear the lack of knowledge about the afterlife would be made known in the future (the Gospels). Thus, it was not lack of revelation that made the rulers not understand the things about Christ, it was their own hearts. The common interpretation of 1 Corinthians 2 does not stand the test of Scripture; therefore, we will continue to examine this topic.

Satan knew Jesus was the Messiah, and Satan blinded the eyes of the earthly rulers, so they did not understand what could have been understood. Satan knows everything in the Bible and understands it. Satan knew he would be bruised in the head, as part of the curse and his struggle with God. *"He (Christ) shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel"* (Gen. 3:15b, parentheses added). He knew Christ's death would be the major factor in that bruising. However, for some strange reason, he seemed to think that going ahead with the crucifixion would give him the upper hand, if only temporarily, by inflicting whatever damage he could to God and His plan. Why did he think proceeding with the crucifixion would be to his advantage if it were leading to his own head wound? We know the crucifixion did not cause the head wound right at that time, although the day is coming when it will lead to that wound. Paul tells us this when he says Satan was alive and well many years after the crucifixion, but that his days were numbered: *"And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly"* (Rom. 16:20a).

We have to wonder about Satan. After all, his fate is clearly spelled out in Scripture. Satan is very intelligent and crafty, so much so that he is the god of this age. We do know Satan's ego and schemes have enabled him to have most of the world's population in his camp, so he was already doing pretty well during the time Jesus was on earth. Even today, he controls the minds of most people and the financial, educational, political, and religious systems of the world. As we wonder about him, we have to consider there may have been an inkling in his mind that somehow he could trip up God and gain even more.

As we dig into this matter, our aim is to discover the mystery that could have prevented Christ's crucifixion. From Scripture we know God has progressively made His will known throughout history: *"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, ...."* (Heb. 1:1-2). He has also kept certain things secret, and has revealed them at the correct time. The English word "mystery" is a from the Greek word *musterion*, which means a *sacred secret*.<sup>4</sup> The Greek word occurs in the Septuagint Version (280 BC) and means something

<sup>4</sup> The Companion Bible; Zondervan Bible Publishers; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1974.

*concealed*. The word *mysterion* is connected with several concealed or secret things in the Bible. Here are a few examples.

1. The secrets of the kingdom. The Kingdom of Heaven (Heaven coming to earth) had been revealed, but there were secrets about that kingdom that had been concealed until the Lord revealed them to His disciples: " *'Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given'* " (Matt. 13:11b). This is the exact information Isaiah sought.
2. The duration of Israel's blindness. The blindness of Israel had been foretold to Isaiah (Isa. 6:9-10), but the duration of the blindness was kept secret from Isaiah and revealed to Paul: " *For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, ... that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in*" (Rom. 11:25). That partial blindness will continue until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; their blindness will be restored during the Tribulation.
3. The secret of the resurrection. Until 1 Corinthians 15:51, the fact that not everyone would die was a newly revealed secret: " *Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.*"
4. **The great mystery.** The great mystery/secret is the mystery of First Corinthians 2:7, our main text. This mystery is not called "great" in the Bible; that descriptor is used here to indicate this mystery is the main mystery discussed in the Epistles. This is the mystery Paul is referring to in Ephesians 3:9, 5:32; Romans 16:25; Colossians 1:26; and First Corinthians 2:7. This mystery can be defined as the *body of truth that defines the Age of Grace*. The Age of Grace is the period of time during which the mystery is in effect (mid-first century until the Rapture). The main truths of the mystery are discussed in Chapter 4. Here are five of those truths, and all these are radical, new truths never before proclaimed in any previous age.
  - Salvation is *God's gift of grace*, based upon faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and without any works.
  - The making of *one body of believers* (church) composed of all people (Jews and Gentiles).
  - *Salvation is offered to everyone*, apart from the conversion of Israel.
  - The believer is *indwelt by the Holy Spirit*, and is said to be "in Christ."
  - *A whole new Age* would be added to the time of human existence. A new Age was needed to provide the required time for the truths of the mystery to take place.

The teaching of the great mystery is found only in the Pauline epistles. There alone we find the things that had been concealed and kept secret since the world began. Ephesians 3:5 reads: " . . . *which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets.*" Saying, "as it has now been revealed" shows the mystery previously had not been revealed at all. The language also makes it clear this mystery had not been revealed previously in a different manner; instead, it had never been revealed in any way. This means it cannot be found in typology, parables, analogies, or whatever, prior to Paul; if so, Satan would have known.

In the phrase, "*as it has now been revealed*," the root Greek word for revealed is *apokalupto*, which literally means "from cover," that is, to uncover, unveil, or reveal.<sup>5</sup> It is the taking away of the veil of darkness. We are familiar with this word as the title in the book of Revelation, the full unveiling of Jesus Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. In the first century, the believers already knew He was King of Kings and Lord of Lords, but they did not know all the details of what would occur in the end times, and how they would occur; those are part of the unveiling. An unveiling reveals events and details previously unknown. However, the mystery was much more and very different from an unveiling. The mystery was something no one even knew existed.

Consider an artist who makes a great sculpture and invites the public to see it. At first, the sculpture is covered with a veil. Everyone knows there is a statue beneath the veil; they just do not know what it looks like. Then the veil is taken away. The *apokalupto* presents the unveiled statue, so that the exact look, impression, and nature of the statue are made known. The book of Revelation is just that: believers knew of the end times, they just did not have an understanding of many events until the book of Revelation was written. However, that is not the case with the mystery; no one even knew it existed until God revealed it. In the case of the mystery, God had made a sculpture, but He hid the existence of it from everyone. When He made it known that a sculpture existed, He removed the veil at the same time. The words reveal and revelation are action words (verbs), and what was unveiled in First Corinthians 2:10 was the mystery (noun). The mystery was outside the range of unassisted natural comprehension; it could be made known only by divine revelation. It was knowledge what was withheld.

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*Revelation is the action of unveiling, the mystery was the truth revealed.*

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In First Corinthians 2:7, the mystery was ordained (made part of God's plan) before the ages. The Scripture says this wisdom was hidden and kept secret. Such wording cannot be referring to a lack of understanding. God did not hide understanding; what He hid was knowledge of the existence of the mystery. He hid the fact, the actual knowledge of the mystery. In Chapter 2, the following verses were given, the true significance of which may be more clear now (underlining added).

- "... and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3:9).
- "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began" (Rom. 16:25).
- "... the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints" (Col. 1:26).
- "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory" (1 Cor. 2:7).

<sup>5</sup> The Analytical Greek Lexicon; Zondervan Publishing House; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1973.

The Gentile leaders did not really care if Jesus were the Messiah or not, so their involvement in His death would not change much if they knew the mystery. If the Jewish leaders, at the time of Christ, were told of the mystery, they clearly would have rejected it. They were too steeped in the Law and their own rules to even consider Salvation by faith without the Law, or the chosen nation being placed on the same level as Gentile nations, or the notions of sexual and racial equality. If they did not understand who Christ was when He was on the earth, they certainly would not have grasped the mystery; thus, it would be reasonable to believe they would have crucified Him, even if the mystery had been revealed. However, Satan's story is much different; had Satan known, he would have been the one to stop the crucifixion. He would have been able to put the pieces together to see the big picture of what God had planned, and that would have cause Satan to change course. So, it seems the real issue related to Christ's crucifixion is Satan, who guides the minds of the unbelievers (including the rulers of this age). It is he, who would have stopped the crucifixion had he known of the mystery.

No one could know the mystery part of God's plan until He chose to reveal it in the Word. The mystery had to be revealed first, that made it knowable; then the Holy Spirit could illuminate the minds of humans (providing spiritual insight) so they could understand the truth revealed. It is very possible to know something, but not understand it; that is where the Spirit's work is so important. The theory of relativity will be used as an example to help clarify the difference between knowing and understanding. Galileo and Martin Luther did not know of the theory of relativity. They did not know of it because it had not been revealed (that was centuries later). It is not that they did not understand it; it is impossible to understand something that is not known to exist. Knowing comes after revealing. Thus, Einstein had to develop the theory, then reveal it. After it was revealed, the theory was known to exist, that is, people knew of it. After that, it could be studied and understood, at least by some. However, even though most of us know of that theory, we do not understand it. The point is this: people did not know of the mystery, not due to their ignorance, but because God kept it hidden, unrevealed.

The flow of information from God to us.

**1) Develop**  $\Rightarrow$  **2) Reveal**  $\Rightarrow$  **3) Know**  $\Rightarrow$  **4) Understand**

God had developed the plan for our Salvation before He framed the world, but He could not reveal the mystery part of the plan, since the very revelation of the mystery would have ensured the plan failed. He hid some of the plan, and then revealed it at just the right time. Once revealed, people knew of the mystery. Finally, we can understand it with the aid of the Spirit. The earthly rulers did not know of the mystery because it had not been revealed.<sup>6</sup> The rulers and Satan could not know something that was a divine secret; the real reason Satan did not stop the crucifixion was he had no clue what God had planned. Satan knew all that had been revealed and was reacting accordingly. Paul's consistent statements about the mystery being hidden, not known, being revealed in Paul's day, saying ". . . *but now has been revealed,*" make it clear it was not revealed in other ages or generations. Paul is very clear. He was not talking about lack of human understanding of what had been revealed, but that God had kept the mystery from everyone's knowledge.

<sup>6</sup> Modern translations do readers a disfavor by translating the Greek word, normally translated know, as understand, in 1 Corinthians 2:8. Using the word understand, promotes a common misunderstanding of this verse. The word understand implies the mystery had been revealed and was known, but the rulers did not understand it. Paul is not saying that; the mystery had not been revealed to anyone, which is why no one knew. Had they known about it, they would not have crucified Christ, and the crucifixion was the most important aspect of all that God had in mind.





## CHAPTER FOUR

### Exploring the Mystery

The value of a secret depends on why, and from whom, it must be hidden.  
(*Author*)

#### The Mystery Is

The mystery (secret) mentioned so often by the Apostle Paul, *is the body of truth that defines the Age of Grace*, the Age in which we live. The mystery is the truth that is specific to the Age of Grace, not other ages. An incredible amount of truth is not specific to our Age; such truth is contained in the Old Testament, Gospel records, and non-Pauline books of the Bible. The truth revealed prior to Paul is common truth; the special truth revealed in Paul's day is what defines our Age. *Thus, the mystery is the defining truth for our Age.* Understanding this concept is imperative, so that we can differentiate between what God is doing today, and what He did in the past or will do in the future.

The Age of Grace (mid-first century until the Rapture) is the specific period of time during which the mystery pertains (Eph: 3:9; Rom. 16:25; Col. 1:26; 1 Cor. 2:7). Because the mystery takes place in a specific Age, that Age is often used as a synonymous term for the mystery. God had to make a special Age in which the mystery's truth would apply, so that Age and the mystery are often used interchangeably. So, it is common to refer to the Age of Grace as the mystery, which is acceptable, but technically, the mystery is the truth that makes our Age a reality. The main truths of the mystery are these: (Note: more details are listed later.)

- *Salvation is God's gift by grace:* God dispenses His grace to save us, upon our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior; no works or righteous deeds are involved (Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Tim. 1:9).
- *The Body of Christ:* one new spiritual body was created of all of believers, and this body is the true Church. All believers are united in Him and become one. There are no distinctions between people today; no group has special privileges (Eph. 2:15-16, 3:16, 5:30; Col. 1:18, 3:10-12).
- *Salvation is available to everyone:* God offers Salvation to every person on an equal basis (1 Cor. 12:12-13; Gal. 3:28). This opportunity to be saved occurs, even though Israel failed to accept Christ (Rom. 11:11-13, 15).

- *Believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit:* the Holy Spirit enters and dwells within each believer. The Spirit will not leave and is there to produce Christ-likeness in us (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; Phil. 3:9).
- *Believers are blessed with spiritual blessings:* there are many spiritual blessing that the believer receives, and most of them were never before known (Eph. 1 and 2). The believer is given the position of being "in Christ," meaning the believer is placed into Christ and made one with Him through a spiritual baptism performed by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27).

There is much more to the mystery, but this provides the basics. Since the mystery was kept hidden, all the components of the mystery, and/or the Age of Grace, of necessity, were also hidden. Thus, prior to the mystery being revealed, no one knew about the specific teachings listed above. To help clarify, people knew of Salvation prior to the Age of Grace, but totally new was it being offered without works or without becoming a proselyte: a Jew. Similarly, people knew of the indwelling Holy Spirit, but in the past that experience was only for special people and for a limited period of time. They even knew of a promise of the indwelling Spirit during the future Kingdom. However, no one had a clue of the Spirit's coming before the Kingdom to dwell within every believer or that He would not leave them.

The teachings of the mystery are either altogether new (e.g., Body of Christ), new revelations that expand previous teachings into unheard areas (e.g., indwelling Spirit for all believers), or reveal a lunge forward in time to incorporate truths previously designated for the future Kingdom (e.g., spiritual blessings). The items listed above are only the start. Many more distinctive truths of the mystery include being sealed with the Holy Spirit, eternal security, being seating in heavenly places, Rapture, Judgment Seat of Christ, and so on. These truths are peculiar to the mystery or, we could say, Age of Grace. Knowing these distinctive truths does have a significant impact on personal belief and church doctrine.

### **Christ's Death Was Not the Mystery**

The mystery was not Christ's death. No logical approach can maintain that if the rulers, especially Satan, had known Christ had to die, they would not have crucified Him. Even if the rulers did not understand He had to die, Satan surely did. Satan also knew His death was written in the Word and planned by God. The unsaved rulers were mere pawns, following the god of this age. The issue is that Satan knew Christ had to die, and he went along with it anyway. Why did he do that? Why did he not do all he could to prevent Christ's death, since preventing His death really is what would have upset God's plan?

Some examples will be given to substantiate that Christ's death had been revealed long before Paul wrote First Corinthians (the main text of this book, in~ 59 AD); His death was no secret to believers or Satan.

- The first prophecy that Christ had to die was perhaps a bit obscure, when first given. Once additional Scripture had been revealed; it was easy to determine what was meant when God cursed Satan and said, "*He [Christ] shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel*" (Gen. 3:15b, brackets added). Although not easily understood at first, and perhaps rather ambiguous in terminology, the fact Christ had to die was revealed in prophecy right from the very start. His death was certainly not hidden. Satan knew what this meant, way back in Genesis.

- The Passover blood placed on the door post, the scapegoat of Leviticus 16, the Jewish Holy days and feasts, and the various animal sacrifices, all referred to substitutionary sacrifices (Ex. 12 and Lev. 1-5), that is, sacrifices pointing to the true Lamb of God. The sacrificial system and the doctrine of atonement (covering of sin with animal blood) were shadows of the heavenly reality (Heb. 10:3:-7). The words of Abraham to Isaac, *"My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering"* (Gen. 22:8), indicated to Old Testament believers that God would provide His son as the Lamb. The typology, figures, and foreshadowing of the Old Testament were obvious references to Christ's death.
- *"They gape at Me with their mouths ... I am poured out like water, And all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax ... They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots"* (Psa. 22:13-18). Human rulers may not have understood the truth of this passage; but, believers could understand it, and Satan knew it well. This is a clear description of Jesus' suffering on the Cross.
- *"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require. Then I said, 'Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God' "* (Psa. 40: 6-8a). These verses clearly spell out Christ's future death, as Hebrews 10 verifies. Those were who are led by the Spirit could understand this spiritual truth.
- Even unbelievers can grasp these words: *"He is despised and rejected by men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all"* (Isa. 53: 3-6). The Redeemer's death was a prominently prophesied event in the Old Testament, likely the most prophesied of all.
- A person does not have to understand much of this prophecy by Daniel to realize "cut off" refers to Christ's death, and not for His own sins: *"And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself..."* (Dan. 9:26a).
- *" And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn' "* (Zech. 12:10). *"And one will say to him, 'What are these wounds between your arms (hands)?' Then he will answer, 'Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends' "* (Zech. 13:6, parentheses added). These passages will be fulfilled in the future when the house of Israel finally grasps that Jesus was the Messiah. However, these verses were written in the past, and clearly make the point of the Messiah's death.
- *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up"* (Jn. 3:14; see Num. 21:9). And why did He have to be lifted up on the Cross? So that whoever believes in Him should have eternal life (Jn. 3:15). The fact He had to die was carefully and strategically presented throughout Scripture, making it a well-revealed and known event.

The fact Christ had to die was no mystery; it was prophesied in the Bible many times and in many ways. By New Testament times, Satan knew, with absolute certainty, that Jesus was the Messiah, He came to earth to die, and His death would provide redemption for sinners. The earthly rulers, and even the disciples at first, did not understand Christ's mission, but Satan knew Christ's death would be the means of Salvation. Satan did not know about the Age of Grace or the full accomplishments of His death in that Age. Thus, while the complete understanding and spiritual significance of Christ's death were not fully known until the mystery was revealed to Paul, Satan understood the significance of all that had been revealed up to that time. The earthly rulers were under his influence, and while he blinded the eyes of those rulers, he knew all that had been revealed. What Satan did not know, because it was a mystery, is that God would set aside unbelieving Israel and reveal a whole new purpose for a new Age.

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*If it were not for the mystery, none of us would be saved.*

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Christ predicted His own death, " *'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death; and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again'* " (Matt. 20:18-19). The overwhelming testimony of Scripture, beginning to end, attests to the central theme of all time—the Crucifixion. That Satan would be crushed as a result of that death and that Satan would end up in an eternal state of punishment were not secrets. What the rulers of this age did not know was what His death would accomplish in the Age of Grace (AOG). If Satan had known all what Jesus Christ actually would accomplish through the Cross, Satan would have avoided it with whatever power he was able to muster. Christ's full accomplishments, through death, were not known and are the truths that define our Age. That was what was revealed to Paul, that is, the full accomplishments of Christ's death, and it had more significance than ever realized. A whole new Age was introduced to provide the time needed for the tremendous accomplishments of that death to take place (Lk. 18:33-34; Matt. 12:38-42, 16:21:28; Mk. 8:31-38, 9:30-32).

Incidentally, the bruise to Satan's head is not literal, but figurative of the result of the spiritual battle between God and Satan. The heel is of lower significance, while the head is a vital part of the body. A heel wound would hurt, but a head wound would be devastating. The language is of a spiritual nature and denotes the temporary suffering of the Seed, and the complete destruction of Satan and his works. Satan surely could see Christ's death would be his head blow, yet proceeded with aligning the rulers to put Him on the Cross. The reason for such strange behavior, in light of all that was known, is very perplexing. The full accomplishments of Christ's death will result in Satan's head wound; however, even today Satan has not been so wounded. Satan's bruise is coming: "*And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen*" (Rom. 16:20).

### **The Gospel Was Not the Mystery**

The mystery was not that Jesus Christ was the Savior or the general teaching of Salvation. The term "general teaching of Salvation" may sound odd. The word "general" refers to the fact God always had a way for believers to be saved; thus, Salvation is a "general teaching." The mystery began to be revealed around 41AD, which was after Christ's death. The teachings of Jesus Christ as Savior, and the Gospel in general, were taught throughout the Gospel records, well before Paul. In the following verses, the gospel

of the Kingdom is the good news concerning the heavenly Kingdom coming to earth; a person could get into that Kingdom by believing the Gospel as presented in the Gospel records.

- *"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom...."* (Matt. 4:23).
- *"Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom...."* (Matt. 9:35).
- *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"* (Mk. 1:1).
- *"... The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand...."* (Mk. 1:15).
- *"...'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved....' "* (Mk.16:15b-16a).
- *"'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life' "* (Jn. 3:16).

Since the Gospel, in general, had been taught in some way right from the beginning, it obviously could not be the mystery, which was kept hidden. The clear teaching of the Gospel, by Jesus, in Matthew through John, was well known before Paul. However, the specific Gospel that applies particularly to our Age was unknown until it was revealed to Paul. Thus, the Gospel Paul received was part of the great mystery; accordingly, that particular Gospel was not known in previous ages. The Gospel that specifically applies to our Age is simply this: Salvation is based purely upon faith in Christ, without any works, baptism, or any other religious acts. Thus, what was new was that acts of obedience, or religious deeds, were not required as in past ages. This knowledge may be a bit confusing, but God always had good news, "gospel," in the past. For example, when Jesus was on the earth, a person had to believe and to be baptized to be saved; the Gospel of Salvation, in general, was no mystery. However, the good news in Paul's day revealed that Salvation was by faith alone; this new view of Salvation was unknown and part of the great mystery of our Age. Two verses from Galatians will be used to make the point the Gospel taught by Paul was a new revelation, and, as such, it was part of the truth for our Age.

- *"But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ"* (Gal. 1:11-12).
- *"And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them (Apostles) that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles...."* (Gal. 2:2, parenthesis added).

The Gospel Paul taught was not the Gospel of the earthly Kingdom. What Paul received was something very new, which is why he says it was not made known to him by another person, but by direct, Divine revelation. Both the Gospel of the Kingdom (taught in the Gospel records) and the Gospel of the Grace of God (taught by Paul) rely upon Christ's death as the sacrifice for sin. Without that death, there would be no Gospel of any kind. The Gospel revealed to Paul was so new that he had to go to the Apostles and tell them what He was teaching the Gentiles. The Twelve Apostles, at that time, were still teaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, which had to give way to the Gospel of the Grace of God. Therefore, the teachings based upon the Law had to give way to the teachings of Grace. Such a change was not a mere

advancement in teaching; it was a revolution. Figuratively speaking, the mystery was not a theological ripple, but a tsunami, or a change in sea level. This was a revolution the Twelve Apostles had no prior knowledge of, and which not only overturned their world but all the ages to come.

To summarize, the death of Christ and the Gospel of Salvation, in general, were not the mystery; they certainly were not hidden in God, as Ephesians 3:9 states. Satan knew of them very well indeed. Thus, it is incorrect to say the rulers of this age would not have crucified Christ had they known of the Gospel of Salvation. The earthly rulers may have been blinded, but Satan was aware of all God had revealed up to that time, and had no hint anything more was to come from God. Satan would have told the rulers not to crucify Christ if he thought God was going to introduce something new that would disrupt Satan's intentions. Satan knew Christ had to die because he knew of the Gospel, yet he vigorously proceeded with Christ's death. Why he did this seems to be a conundrum.

## **Why a New Age Was Needed**

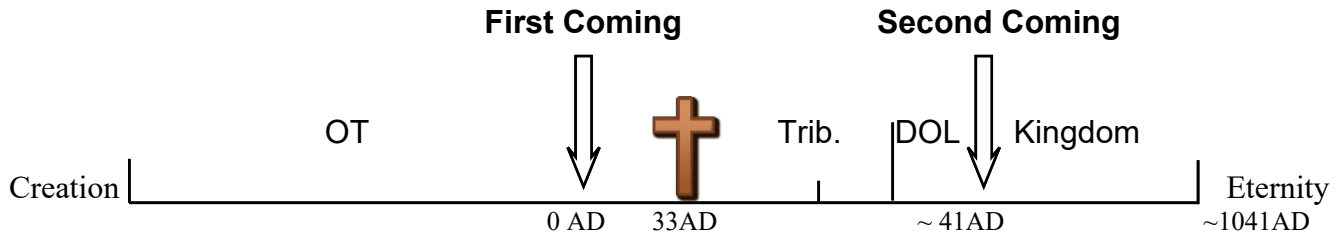
### **Creating Time for The Mystery to Take Effect**

Chapter 2 noted that God's plan for humans required a place for that plan to take place, so God created the world. In time, God introduced a new body of truth composed of events and entities, which required considerable time to take effect. So, God added the required extra time by introducing a whole new Age. There would have been little sense in introducing new truth, if there were no time for it to operate. Thus, the mystery included additional time to that previously indicated by God for the span of human existence, or, we could say, more time was added to God's clock of the ages. This extra time ensured that the full benefits of Christ's death could be realized. Had there been no extra time, the last days would have occurred in the first century.

New truth from God requires a lot of time to take effect. Just as time was required to get from the proclamation of a coming Redeemer until the actual arrival of the Redeemer, so, too, was extra time needed for God's new truth, the mystery. Revealing truth is a relatively rapid process compared with making that truth known around the world, for people to understand it, and for generations to enjoy the benefits. To understand this matter better, we have to go back and review biblical history and prophecy. Doing so will shed light on why God required a new Age, and why Satan and the rulers would have been outraged had they understood this truth.

Based upon what had been revealed in the Old Testament and Gospels, God's timeline of past and coming events is represented in Figure 4.1. The long horizontal line, starting at creation and going to eternity, represents time as it progresses from the past to the future (left to right). The major events, pertinent to our study, are shown in their respective location on the timeline. Of course, the timeline is not to scale, but is representative of the major events under consideration. Adam and Eve would be to the far left, and the eternal state, Heaven, on the far right. Between creation and the First Coming, no events are shown; this would be the time of Old Testament events and people, such as: the Flood, Abraham, the Exodus, Moses, Easter, David, Ezekiel....

*The introduction of a new body of truth, meant there had to be  
a period of time for that truth to operate.*



**Figure 4.1.** God's Timeline for Past and Future Events, as Known in Christ's Time.

The First Coming of Christ is the first notable event shown in Figure 4.1, referring to His birth at time zero. The next event, the very central event, is the Cross in ~33 AD. At the time of the Cross, all the events to the right of the Cross were in the future and known by Satan; these events could, and should, have been known by the Jewish rulers. The Old Testament is full of passages referring to the Tribulation, the Day of the Lord (DOL), the Second Coming of Christ, and the earthly Kingdom.<sup>30</sup> The Kingdom was the hope of the believers: this was the time when there would be no more tears, pain, suffering, war; wolves would dwell with lambs ... and Christ would rule upon the earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The Kingdom was seen literally as Heaven on earth, which is why it is called the Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>31</sup> However, before the Kingdom came, there would be the dreaded last days, composed of the Tribulation and Day of the Lord, and culminating in the Second Coming of Christ.

By the time of Christ, the Tribulation was known to be exactly seven years long. According to Acts 2:16-18, the Tribulation began in 33 AD, or it was on the cusp of beginning. After the Tribulation, the Day of the Lord would occur, but it was of unknown length. The Tribulation was shown in the Old Testament to be divided in half: the first half devoted to mankind's wrath directed primarily toward Israel, and the second half devoted to Satan's wrath directed toward Israel. God's wrath against all His enemies follows, as is seen in the well-propheesied Day of the Lord.

The Day of the Lord (DOL) was known to be the time when God breaks His long-held silence and speaks; when He speaks, everyone will know, for this will be the great day of His wrath (Isa. 13:9). At this time, His wrath will be directed toward Satan, his cohorts, and unbelievers who will see this Day as fearsome. Conversely, this Day will be seen as a time of deliverance by believers. Thus, the DOL will be a blessing for believers, but the worst nightmare in the world for unbelievers. The Day of the Lord is one of the most talked about events in the Old Testament, describing those nations aligned against Israel and how they are brought to ruin. The DOL also describes how believers (and those aligned with Israel) will be delivered to go into the Kingdom, with the Lord. The purpose of the Day of the Lord is to destroy His enemies, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to complete the prophecies of end times, and to anoint the Most Holy

<sup>30</sup> Scriptural references for all these events are not shown, so as not to lose track of our purpose. Such references can be found in the book entitled *The Song of Solomon—A Love Story with a Hidden Message*.

<sup>31</sup> The word Kingdom in this book refers to the earthy, millennial Kingdom in which Christ reigns, unless noted otherwise. The Gospel records generally refer to the Kingdom of Heaven, which means it comes from Heaven to the earth. The Kingdom is literal; it is not Heaven itself. The Kingdom of God is a separate term describing the universal Kingdom of God, all His concerns, including angels, the Body of Christ of today, and the Kingdom of Heaven.

(Dan. 9:24). The exact length of this day is unknown, but clearly more than twenty-four hours long. Most likely it could be measured in days or months, but anything more than a year or two would seem unlikely.

The opportunity to accept Christ was presented to Israel, but God knew they would not accept Him. There had to be a way to wake that nation up from a long slumber, to see their need for the Savior. The way that God predetermined would work for bringing about that conversion was through affliction, and not just any affliction, but the specific and targeted time of trouble of the Tribulation and DOL. From all God had revealed in the past, and knowing Israel would reject Him, this biblical plan was well established. The Tribulation and DOL would occur if Israel accepted Christ or not. One way or the other, those horrendous end-times events were destined to occur. However, the focus of what would be accomplished changed. If Israel were to accept Him, the focus would be on protecting them while the enemies of God were vanquished. If Israel were to reject Him, the focus would be on using the affliction to refine and purify Israel while also destroying His enemies. The latter is what will occur. During those times of great affliction, Israel will awaken as to who Christ is, their sinful past, and their need to believe in Him. As the affliction nears the end, God will have worked a miracle in Israel; they will all be saved (Rom. 11:26). At that time, God will protect the believers from the last-day-events that are unfolding.

Israel's failure to believe in Christ meant Salvation could not go to the Gentiles, at or around that time, through the multiplied seed of Abraham—Israel. While Israel may have failed, God's love for the Gentiles still burned strongly. His concern for those people had to be made known, even though Israel fell (did not believe). Thus, God's plan for humanity included the provision of Salvation going to the Gentiles, totally independent of the chosen nation. This meant the Gentiles would be blessed through the singular seed, Christ, totally apart from Israel's conversion. Of course, the provision for Gentile Salvation apart from Israel is a basic tenant of the mystery.

To make the point of the need for a new Age crystal clear, we need to further consider Figure 4.1. We will see obvious and irreconcilable differences between the prophetic plan and actual history. Recognizing such differences is what helps us see God made a change, drastic at that, to what had been revealed in the Bible up to the first century. God's change was the addition, or insertion, of a new Age to the Bible's prophetic plan. If we do not recognize such a change, biblical prophecy seems absurd. Please refer to Figure 4.1, and compare actual events to those prophesied. In that figure, the DOL is arbitrarily given the length of one year. Thus, the Tribulation and DOL have a combined length of eight years. Accordingly, Christ should have returned around 41 AD, the Kingdom would have begun around 41 AD, and ended in 1041 AD. This means the heavenly Kingdom occurred during some pretty bleak times in history, and we must now be living in the eternal state. Hmmmmm, not quite what most of us expected.

The Tribulation, DOL, Second Coming, and Kingdom already should have occurred. The Kingdom would have ended around 1041 AD, but that surely was not the case; something is clearly wrong. The so-called dark and middle ages would have been the time of the anticipated earthly Kingdom. Obviously that cannot be true. If the Bible is to be our guide today, where is today on the biblical timeline? Over two thousand years have passed since the Cross, and that would place today in the eternal state. Anytime after 1041 AD would be in the eternal state; but, we assume, most of us do not believe we are in Heaven. The issue then becomes one of believing the Bible in the face of what seems to be overwhelming evidence that it is in error, or seeking to reconcile our understanding of it with recorded history. If we cannot reconcile its teachings with what has been observed in history, then our faith may be in vain. Harsh as the preceding may sound, it is said with the understanding that in our hearts we know the Bible is correct, so that means we must get our theology aligned with what the Bible is actually teaching. This example shows us how misperceptions of the Bible lead us astray, and how we have to adjust our thinking.



The revealed plan up to the mid-first century seems to have been an either/or option: either Israel could accept Him and go as witnesses to the world, or they could reject Him and not go to the world. They chose the latter. At this point, God had to step in, for their choice was not acceptable to Him. He had to reveal a totally new option. When Israel's religious rulers and general population failed to believe in Christ, the nation was not aligned with God's plan, which means the nation was on a steep decline, heading for its downfall. A little later, the nation rejected the Holy Spirit, and that was the final straw (explained shortly). However, Israel did not fall without having the Gospel and the Messiah presented to them, and with numerous opportunities to accept Him as Savior. Israel did not accept Him, so the last days were destined to begin.

Figure 4.1 easily was seen to be in error in the first centuries, since after Christ's death none of the predicted events occurred. In the first centuries, the question arose as to whether or not the Bible was truly inspired, for it certainly seemed in error. Some expositors concluded a literal understanding of the Bible led to wrong interpretations. Thus, in the second century, early church fathers, like Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Cyprian, rejected the literal millennial view because of problems with the timeline.<sup>32</sup> Those problems were very instrumental in giving birth to the amillennial view of Scripture.<sup>33</sup> Those fathers concluded there was an apparent misinterpretation of Scripture, and their thinking caused a shift to the amillennial position.

The amillennial view is based upon the belief the millennial Kingdom is figurative, a spiritual Kingdom, not a literal earthly Kingdom. The Reformers accepted Augustine's (~ 400 AD) long-standing amillennial theology. This is the view held by most denominational churches today, and the view being adapted by more and more evangelical churches. Of course, these churches believe in the Second Coming, but the Tribulation, DOL, and Kingdom are generally interpreted in a figurative/spiritual manner. If the early church fathers and reformers had only the Old Testament and Gospel records, this interpretation may have been tenable. However, the real issue today, in light of the entire Scripture, is the failure of the early church fathers and reformers to recognize the mystery. If they had, they would have understood how a literal millennium fits perfectly into God's plan for the ages.

The thousand years, mentioned in Revelation 20, are regarded by amillennialists as symbolic, generally of eternity, not as a literal description of time. The Kingdom is considered a spiritual thing, not a literal, earthly Kingdom. Thus, amillennialists hold that the Kingdom already began in the first century, is spiritual in nature, and identical with the current Age of Grace, or Church Age. We supposedly are living in God's promised Kingdom right now, a position that is hard to maintain in light of constant wars, plagues, world-wide suffering, the Holocaust, and so forth. Amillennialists believe at the end of the Church Age, Christ will return in final judgment and permanently reign in the new Heaven and new earth (for amillennialists this means in Heaven).

### **The Prophetic View Was Obscured**

If we are honest, we have to admit that attempts to interpret some of the Bible's prophecies literally results in a headlong dash into a brick wall. Biblical prophecies make sense up to the time of Christ, and then they seem to fall apart. If we try to put some of the Bible's prophecies into a timeline of what happened and when, as in Figure 4.1, the Bible just does not seem to be correct. Something is missing

<sup>32</sup> The millennial view contends there is a future, literal kingdom on earth, which will be 1000 years in length (Rev. 20:6-7).

<sup>33</sup> Amillennialism (in Greek *a* means *no*, so no millennial kingdom) rejects the belief that Jesus Christ will have a literal, thousand-year-long, physical reign on the earth.

in prophesied events, and that something muddles propesy and our understanding of it. As we look into prophecy, we will come to grips with the fact the prophecies of old were looking far into the future, so seeing the details in such a view was difficult.

Prophets saw the future much as we see distant mountain ranges. When we look at mountain ranges far in the distance, we see the foothills, behind them the lower mountains, and then behind them the huge mountains. We get the impression the foothills and lower mountains are relatively close to the towering mountains. When we get there, we find tremendous distances between these features, even though they looked close together from a distant view. Closer, we see the actual topography is one with valleys and wide-open spaces between the mountain ranges. The prophets saw the mountain peaks, but could not see these valleys. Their prophecies mentioned the peaks, the highlights of prophecy, but did not mention the unseen valleys, where most of our lives take place. The prophecies that once seemed incorrect can now be seen with a better perspective, based upon our place in time. Once we see the valleys, our perspective changes and those old prophecies look like they are right on target.

This is perfectly exemplified in Isaiah: *"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace"* (Isa. 9:6). The first part of this verse explains that Jesus Christ would come as a child, and yet in the same sentence it tells of the time when He will rule as the exalted Lord. We now know that over 2,000 years has interviened between "Unto us a Son is given" and "the government will be upon His shoulder." This gap in time does not in any way cast doubt upon the prophecy, its literal fulfillment, or God's faithfulness. It shows how the prophets saw the mountain peaks: in this case one peak was His first coming to die and the second peak was his second coming to reign. What they did not see was the vast valley between, which is more than 2,000 years wide. This gap in time totally befuddles many, making them think prophecy is not intended to be taken literally. That valley is where the Age of Grace is being played out. There was an obvious gap in time, but recognizing such a gap is far from realizing God had a whole new age in mind, for no prophet saw or predicted the mystery. In essence, we can characterize the mystery, not as a typical unseen valley between mountain ranges, but as a completely hidden, secret valley that no one knew about.



**Figure 4.2.** Example of a hidden valley between two mountain ranges. The green valley represents the unseen Age of Grace. The mountain tops represent what the prophets saw from afar. (Brenner Pass, in the Alps, on the border between Italy and Austria.) (Source: [wikimedia.org/commons](http://wikimedia.org/commons))

The prophets often did not understand their own prophecies, but that did not make them doubt the veracity of the Word. Peter notes that they tried to understand those troubling prophecies, but could not, "... *searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of*

*Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow"* (1 Pt. 1:11). The Bible's own prophets saw the future as though it were far

away on the horizon. When they spoke of the future, they spoke of the mountain tops, which is all they could see. Viewing future events, from way back in time, meant they were seeing the skyline, but not the valleys. The peaks were the major events, as revealed to them. What they saw were His first coming in suffering and His second coming in triumph and glory. The big valley was not visible to these prophets. Thus, the prophets saw many future events, but the time between them was often unknown since they saw only the peaks. The prophetic view had the effect of foreshortening time, making the future seem shorter in time than it actually turned out to be. Because many people do not understand this effect, prophecy does not make sense to them. Therefore, they say that God abandoned certain prophecies when He set Israel aside, or that prophecy is not to be taken literally.

In Acts 2, we read of the process that eventually revealed a wide-open, secret valley between the mountain peaks. The mystery had not been revealed by the time of Acts 2, but the awareness of a disruption in prophetic time was made obvious. As far as had been revealed, Israel was at the threshold—or actually in—the terrible last days; the Tribulation was there, according to Acts 2:14-18. We will explain shortly how Israel could be in the last days in the first century, while the prophecies of the Tribulation and doom have not occurred for over 2000 years. In general, by the time of the early chapters of Acts, Israel had rejected all three members of the Godhead.<sup>34</sup> Israel was then set aside; which was not permanent, but only a temporary setting aside, and for a specific purpose. Setting aside means that God paused dealing with Israel as the chosen nation, but this pause has a time limit.

Soon after His death and resurrection, Israel was unconverted and God's clock was at 11:59:59 PM, one second before midnight; one second before the dreaded last days would begin. If the last second were to tick off, the last days would have come. In fact, the last days may actually have begun, according to Peter's testimony in Acts 2:15-18. Since Israel was in unbelief, that nation could not be God's channel of blessing to the Gentiles, meaning the nations would not have been given a chance for Salvation. Understanding the plight of the Gentiles is critical to understanding what was going on in those days. If the Gentiles, the vast majority of people in the world, were never given a chance to be saved, then that may have indicated Satan was triumphing over God. From all appearances, history was proceeding in a manner in which the world was entering into the dreaded last days and with only a handful of people saved. In addition, no Gospel was presented to the unsaved nations, which God had said would happen. We need to review the last days to see what was going on and how the mysterious Age of Grace fits into all this.

## **The Awesome Last Days**

The last days will be defined as the events that occur after the Age of Grace but before the Kingdom; thus, the last days are the Tribulation, Day of the Lord, and His Second Coming. These events will not be figurative events; they will be very real. As mentioned above, these days will be slightly over seven years long (a value of eight years was used in Figure 4.1). The last days are seen by humans from two views; for believers, these days will be a time of deliverance, but for most of the world it will be a time to terror. The Day of the Lord is when the Second Coming of Christ occurs. This day, undefined in length, is when God will take vengeance on those arrayed against Him; and that vengeance applies to those set against Israel. God will be defending Israel in the DOL, because at that time those remaining in Israel will be believers, as a result of the Tribulation (Rom. 11:25-26). "Awesome" is the word used to describe the Day of the Lord; for the majority of the world that day is awesome in terror and dread (Isa. 13:6-9, 34:8; Joel 1:15, 2:31; Amos 5:18-20; Zeph. 1-14-15, 2:3; Mal. 4:5; Acts 2:19-21; Rev. 6:17).

<sup>34</sup> Stam, Cornelius; Things that Differ; Berean Bible Society; Germantown, WI.

To understand what happened shortly after Christ's death, when prophecy just seemed to fail, we must look at the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after His death. The Day of Pentecost, in Acts 2, is very instructive in helping us gain perspective on what was occurring, and what was about to occur in God's plan. *"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language"* (Acts 2:1-6).

The events that occurred on that Pentecost were such a new thing that some mocked and said the disciples were full of new wine.<sup>35</sup> Peter came to their defense and said they were not drunk, but what was happening was a fulfillment of Joel's prophesy. What Peter said next seems like he may have made a mistake. However, the Bible neither suggests Peter was wrong nor corrects his words, so it is obvious he was correct. Here is what Peter said: *"For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour of My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy'"* (Acts 2:15-18).

The reason people think Peter was wrong is his statement concerning Pentecost being "in the last days." If Peter were correct, and Pentecost were in the last days, then why has the world continued for another 2000 years? Since human history has continued for so long, many people contend Pentecost was the start of something new, not the last days. If Pentecost were in the last days, that means it was the end of some age or dispensation; however, today most Christians believe the Church began at Pentecost.<sup>36</sup> The term "last days" cannot be the start of something new; it has to refer to the end of something. Thus, we have a real dilemma here: how could Peter be right, that is, how is it possible that Pentecost was in the last days and then history just continued for another 2,000 years?

Peter continues: *"I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved"* (Acts 2:19-21). Peter's words have a significant bearing on our understanding of the mystery. The solution to the dilemma noted above is quite simple and biblical. Peter was correct about the last days; Israel was indeed entering into the last days just as Joel predicted. The last days of Israel's program (Law) are composed of the seven-year Tribulation, and the Day of the Lord (Matt. 24:21-29; Dan. 9:26-27; Joel 3:14-16; Rev. 16). If history had gone on uninterrupted, the Tribulation should have occurred shortly after Pentecost, as Joel had prophesied. The *wonders in heaven and signs in the earth beneath* would have occurred just before the awesome Day of the Lord; but they never materialized. What happened?

What happened was a demonstration of God's mercy. God intervened and prevented the last days from continuing. God interrupted Joel's prophecy, right between Acts 2:18 and 2:19. Thus, what happened at Pentecost was in exact accordance with Acts 2 through verse 18; then came God's interruption. This

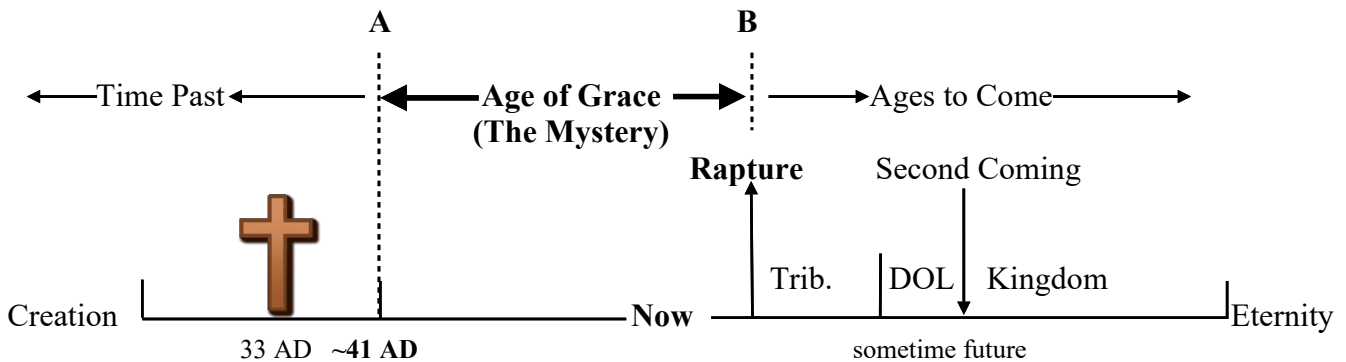
<sup>35</sup> The word Pentecost, hereafter, will refer to the particular Pentecost of Acts 2, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>36</sup> The church of today is referred to by various terms; all have some difference in meaning, but convey a similar idea. The terms used for the church of today, or age in which it occurs, are: Age of Grace, Church Age, Body of Christ, and Dispensation of Grace.

between-verses interruption is not unusual in the Bible. Sometimes the interruption occurs within a single verse, as noted in Isaiah 9:6 (see above). The prophecy of Christ was interrupted in mid-verse in Acts 2, by essentially the same 2,000 years as in Isaiah 9. Our Age caused the interruption. The interruption that occurred at Pentecost and in Isaiah continues to this day; when the interruption is over, world history will resume right where it was interrupted. Thus, when our Age (the interrupter) is over, the last days will begin again with God showing wonders in the heavens above and signs on earth beneath. The interruption is what is preventing the completion of Joel's prophecy.

### The Interruption

God's interruption of history occurred when He introduced a totally new, non-prophesied Age into human history. This new Age is what caused the 2,000 year gap between Peter's "last days" and today. The Age of Grace was an inherent part of God's carefully kept secret, and when that Age was revealed by God, and put into action, it caused the interruption. God had to keep the AOG a secret, not to deceive or deprive us, but to ensure His eternal plan would work. If His secret were known ahead of time, the plan would not work. Our fate and the fate of the world depended upon that secret being kept—at all costs. Had the secret been found out ahead of time, the powers of darkness would not have crucified Christ, and Salvation would not be possible for anyone.



**Figure 4.2.** God's prophetic plan based upon knowledge of the mystery.

In Figure 4.2, the AOG is shown in bold, between points A and B. The "Now" indicates where we surmise today fits into this figure. Our Age could go on for any length of time without upsetting Figure 4.2. Biblical prophecy is not occurring in the Age of Grace: the prophetic clock is stopped, as though God has declared a stoppage of prophetic time during our Age. When our Age ends, the prophetic clock will begin again and time will continue right where it was interrupted. Thus, our Age has caused an *extension of time* that no one had ever known. Now we can see the Bible makes perfect sense. The timeline of the Bible and actual history work together in perfect harmony. Our Age is of undetermined length, but nothing in prophecy has been forgotten or abandoned by God; if something was prophesied, it will occur in the future.<sup>37</sup> As far as prophecy is concerned, the biblical time clock has stopped, as God displays His

<sup>37</sup> The page containing Figure 4.2 can be folded in a way to hide the mystery, so you see the chart the way it looked before the revelation of the mystery. By folding the page, you will see Figure 4.1, and by unfolding it you will see Figure 4.2. The trick is to fold the page so that point B is on top of point A. Two folds are required, each runs the long way on the printed page. First, turn the page with figure 4.2 over, then make a fold at point B. Then, turn the page back to Figure 4.2, so that the figure is showing, and place point B over point A (the new fold at B will allow point B to be placed over A). This bunches the page up some, so carefully push the paper down where it is bulging up (this will create the second fold at the midpoint of the AOG,

grace today. In Acts 2, Pentecost is connected to the end of the previous age, not the start of the Age of Grace. Thus, Pentecost had a specific purpose for the end of the Jewish (Law) Age.<sup>38</sup>

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*Pentecost is connected to the end of the previous age,  
not the start of the Age of Grace.*

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After the Saints in Jerusalem received the Holy Spirit and His spiritual gifts, they waited, waited longer, and then waited some more; but they did not officially leave and go into all the world. They were anticipating being sent out by God; when sent, they would be the channel of blessing (those people God would use to accomplish His purpose), taking the Good News of Jesus into the rest of the world. However, something odd was happening, something was preventing them from leaving Jerusalem. Some persecutions caused some to go out as far as Damascus, but that was not the fulfillment of what was to occur as a result of Pentecost. The disciples did everything right: they received the spiritual gifts (to use as a sign to unbelievers in Israel), they were empowered by the Holy Spirit, and they were ready to go. However, there was a God-given order, a systematic way, in which the worldly outreach was to proceed. They were told, "... *you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*" (Acts 1:8b). They were given the order for their missionary work, that is, they were to start in Jerusalem, then move outward to Judea, then Samaria, and, ultimately, the uttermost parts of the earth.

The problem was the unbelievers in Jerusalem would not heed the signs presented them, or repent, or trust in Jesus Christ. In order for God's plan to proceed, the leaders (primarily the religious leaders) and many (perhaps the majority) of the people in Israel had to be converted " *Repent therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord*" (Acts 3:19). Christ's return was based upon the Jewish people's acceptance of Him. God's clearly revealed prophetic plan specified that the Jewish people had to be converted before the end would come with the establishment of the Kingdom. He would not come until the Jewish people converted. He would not come to set up a Kingdom in which few people believed that Jesus was the King. There was no national awakening or conversion, not even in Jerusalem. So, the disciples were expected to stay in Jerusalem. They were in the last days and expected the Tribulation to begin. The Tribulation would be the means by which God would cause the Jewish people to believe, that is, through strife and anguish. The Tribulation was the furnace of final affliction to save Israel. The biblical evidence made it clear His return would occur after the Tribulation and Day of the Lord. But why was the Tribulation not starting?

We will very briefly review Israel's sordid history to answer the question above. In the Old Testament Israel rejected God the Father: "... *but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them*" (1 Sam. 8:7b)—strike one. Next, the Jewish leaders and general population rejected their Messiah and had Him

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halfway between A and B). The second fold will allow you to place point B over A, without bunching of paper. When you fold the page up, you will see how the prophetic plan indicated the future, and by unfolding the page, you can see how the mystery fits into God's eternal plan. Life today occurs according to the mystery, Figure 4.2.

38 Making a strong distinction between the end of one age and the start of the next may seem a minor issue, since the difference in time is minor. The issue of getting this correct is simply this, if the events of Pentecost are known to be part of the past age, there is less of a tendency to force them incorrectly into the Age of Grace. Thus, matters like communal living, experiential gifts, etc., can be put into their appropriate milieu, i.e., the past age.

crucified, *"We will not have this man to reign over us"* (Lk. 19:14b)—strike two. Then, shortly after Pentecost, the spiritual leaders and people stoned Stephen; then James was killed because it pleased the Jews. These were acts of open rejection and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Stephen said, *"You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you"* (Acts 7:51b). These deaths were a rejection of the Holy Spirit because Stephen and James were full of the Spirit: *"But he, being full of the Holy Spirit...."* (Acts 7:55a). That rejection was no small matter, for Christ said, *"Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men"* (Matt. 12:31).<sup>39</sup> The rejection of the Holy Spirit was strike three, and in baseball that means, you are out! Throughout its history, Israel had rejected all three members of the Godhead, so God was compelled to take action, or the end of life as we know it would have ended with relatively few people saved.

When Israel's spiritual leaders and general population rejected Him, He was compelled to set the chosen nation aside (Rom. 11). It would have been impossible to work with a nation that rejected Him, in all three persons. As He set Israel aside, He began to introduce the mystery. The mystery is what put a hold on the continuation of the last days. By setting Israel aside, the premise of His almost immediate return was abrogated (abandoned); but a new Age, with new hopes, was introduced.

The introduction of a new Age did not nullify God's promises to Israel. The notion He was returning soon had to be abandoned, but not His promises. God's future purpose for Israel will take place as planned. The Israelites will have to be brought to Him through the fire of the Tribulation and DOL. The Lord's Prayer specifically addresses the time of the Tribulation, when there would be a need for being feed miraculously (praying to be given their daily bread was a replay of how God miraculously fed them in the wilderness millennia before), for His Kingdom to come, and so on.

The Tribulation and DOL have a specific, future purpose for Israel: they are the times during which God will refine Israel and bring that rebellious nation to Christ. Israel was destined to go through the dreaded last days, one way or the other. However, once Israel rejected Christ, which God knew would occur, these periods have the function of refining the entire nation of Israel in a special way. The Tribulation is a furnace of affliction to purify Israel by removing the dross and refining her as pure gold. *"I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested"* (Zechariah 13:9). Gold represents the purity of love that Israel had in her youth. After her first love, Israel's history is typified by rejection, ignorance, self-interest, lust, idolatry, spiritual fornication, and so forth. Her heart has to be purified, and doing so requires the heat of God's furnace. The furnace analogy is used by Zechariah because Israel is an adulterous wife and must be restored to pure virginity, a process analogous to treating impure ore with the heat of a furnace to produce pure metal. Restoring Israel to the state of pure virginity is something we have never seen or heard. Only the Lord could devise a plan to do this, and to carry it out. Indeed, the furnace of affliction will refine and prepare the metal (Israel), and in the process, Israel will be restored to the condition of being a pure virgin, meeting the Refiner's purpose (Prov. 27:21).<sup>40 41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is not an unpardonable sin today. Blasphemy against the Spirit can be forgiven today upon belief; it happens all the time. Israel's rejection was unpardonable because throughout history they had rejected all three persons of the Godhead. The blasphemy Jesus spoke about was a national rejection, not a reference to individuals. The nation was not forgiven, at that time, for this sin; instead, they were set aside. When the nation is reborn, in the Tribulation, its people will be forgiven.

<sup>40</sup>Kidner, Derek; *The Proverbs*; Inter-Varsity Press; Downers Grove, IL; 1972.

<sup>41</sup>Shober, Stephen; *The Song of Solomon—A Love Story with a Hidden Message*; ebook on Amazon and [www.grace4you.com](http://www.grace4you.com); also in hard copy from Grace Publications, Grand Rapids, MI.

## Introducing the New Age

Ending one age and beginning another cannot be done overnight; certainly God could do it, but we slow-learning humans need time to comprehend such changes. For information to get from the mind of God to the heart of humans takes considerable time. In common terms, the old age (Law) sort of "phased out," while the new Age of Grace "phased in." In Figure 4.2, the Age of Grace began around 41 AD, but it took something on the order of twelve years to make the full transition from one age to the other, that is, from Pentecost (33 AD) to the Age of Grace (40-45 AD).

Interrupting the prophetic events of the Law Age was an act of mercy and love on God's part. If it were not for this act of love, God's judgment would have come upon all mankind. The interruption of the flow of biblical history was also God's gracious act, allowing us to receive the Gospel even though Israel failed. God used a hidden plan to get the truth to us, and that hidden plan was in His mind from the beginning, knowing Israel would fail, as any nation would have.

Paul became the chief Apostle of our Age, but it took years for Paul to become fully informed of all the new truth that was part of the Age of Grace. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write it all down, so it was perfectly and completely documented in Scripture. As Paul wrote, the truth for the AOG was progressively revealed to us in the written Word, providing all the information humans need, even today.

Some people have supposed the revised timeline, Figure 4.2, is a theological scheme, an invention for the purpose of supporting the Scripture in the face of failure. This supposition is based upon the failure of those people to understand the mystery. If a revised timeline were a human invention, then the Apostle Paul was part of it and part of a deception. Around the time the timeline went awry, God was revealing the new Age and truth to Paul. God knew there was a problem, but humans were not really aware of a problem at that time. If God were the One revealing new truth, we better believe it. If He did not reveal it, then the Apostle Paul was the one who invented the mystery to salvage the veracity of the Word. The mystery is only taught in his Epistles and is what creates a new timeline; so, if Paul were part of the scheme, then his Epistles were not inspired by God. How could anyone rationalize such a thought, for it ignores the fact Paul originally had no interest in Christianity and wanted it to fail. God set him on a new course in life, and then revealed a new message to him. Paul never suggests a problem with the timeline. Certainly, as a Pharisee, Paul had no problems with a failing timeline, not any more than any other Jewish leader. The notion of a scheme to rescue Scripture, or our interpretation of it, could not be based upon a recognized problem with the timeline in Paul's day. However, the need to adjust the timeline was known by God, Who revealed the needed truth at just the right time. Not understanding the mystery creates all sorts of incorrect ideas, while understanding the mystery makes the Bible come alive.

The mystery is not a modern theological invention to make Scripture comport with human history, which would mean adjusting the timeline of Figure 4.1 to agree with actual historical events. The original timeline does not agree with history because it fails to include the mystery, rightfully and logically so, because the mystery was unknown at the time. Once revealed, the mystery required a major alteration to the timeline. The change in the timeline was made by God as a result of introducing a new Age; the change was not made by humans trying to amend a failure in the timeline. Understanding the mystery allows for a common sense understanding of the Bible, and reveals a timeline we can use with confidence.

God's grace is the hallmark of everything in our Age. The mystery is the body of truth pertaining specifically to the Age of Grace, and that truth required a new Age for its fulfillment. The new Age



interrupted the flow of history by introducing more time, a new Age, into human history. Below, are more details pertaining to that body of truth that defines our Age.

- Salvation is God's gift of grace, granted on the basis of faith, and faith alone (Eph. 2:8-9).
- Paul was converted around 35 AD, and the mystery began to be revealed to him in the Arabian desert and from Heaven after his conversion (Gal. 1:15-20; 2 Cor. 12:1-4).
- Peter got a glimpse of coming changes in 41 AD (Acts 10:44-45; 11:1,18).
- The mystery starting being revealed to all humans around 41 AD (Acts 9-11).
- The book of Acts records the setting aside of Israel and the earthly Kingdom, and the introduction of the AOG (Acts 20:24).
- Salvation came to the Gentiles outside of Israel's conversion—in fact, through Israel's fall (Eph. 2:11-16, 3:2-9; Rom. 11:1-12). The mystery was an unbelievable blessing to the Gentiles, who were without hope and without God at that time (Eph. 2:12). The mystery revealed that Salvation would come to the Gentiles before Israel's conversion, that is, earlier than previously expected, meaning more Gentiles would be saved. In fact, if it were not for the mystery, none of us would be saved today <sup>42</sup> because Israel's conversion has not yet taken place.
- Jews and Gentiles are on equal footing because all people are equal before God. He treats everyone with favor and kindness, with no distinction. There is no preferred nation (as Israel had been), group, gender, or race of people (1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 3:11; Col. 3:11).
- God made one new spiritual body out of all believers; this new spiritual body is called the Body of Christ—the invisible church (Eph. 2:19-20, 5:32). Christ is the head of this spiritual body, and the believers are the various body parts (Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:30).
- Believers today are joined to Christ, meaning we are made one with Him through a spiritual baptism performed by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor.12:13; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-6). Because we are made one with Christ, we are identified completely with Him. Thus, Christ's attributes and accomplishments are transferred to us. His death becomes our death (Gal. 2:20), and His resurrection ours (Col. 2:12, 3:1). Thus, in God's view, we are holy, justified, forgiven, raised, seated in Heaven....
- Since we are already joined to Christ and members of His body, we are not waiting to be joined to Him, as would be the case if the Church were the so-called bride of Christ. The bride will be Israel in the future, when that nation is purified during the Tribulation, and when she will become a fit bride for the Lord.
- His kindness and favor are witnessed by the fact the believer today is blessed with all spiritual blessings in Heaven, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and can have a transformed mind (Eph. 1:3; Rom. 12:1-2).

<sup>42</sup> God provided a way for Gentiles to be saved in all ages, by becoming Jewish proselytes; however, Ephesians 2:12 indicates the Gentiles in general, with some exceptions, had "no hope" and were "without God in the world."

- Gentile salvation occurred before Israel's conversion; therefore, the believer today has Israel's spiritual blessings before the prophesied time, according to God's love (Rom. 15:27).
- Did Jesus Christ know of the mystery? Of course, but He could not reveal it in any way, or even hint at it, until the right time, or His death would have been prevented.
- The Rapture is a special catching-up of just the believers at the end of the AOG. The teaching of the Rapture reveals that not all will die before they see the Lord (1 Cor. 15:51).
- Each believer's Salvation is sealed, and that seal cannot be broken, not even by the believer. This means the believer's Salvation is eternally secure, in Christ. The seal was created by God and He controls it; we do not. Thus, the believer is assured of not losing her or his Salvation because of sin, times of doubt, feeling of unworthiness.... (Eph. 1:13, 4:30).
- The Judgment Seat of Christ is a special, unique, judgment immediately after the Rapture. This Seat is really a rewards seat, and just for those in the AOG (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; Eph. 6:8).

First Corinthians 2:7 teaches the full significance of Christ's death was not known in previous ages. In the Old Testament there may have been a problem identifying Who Christ would be, when He would come, how redemption would be achieved.... However, by the time Christ arrived on Earth, there could be no doubt who Jesus was (Jn. 5:39), or that He would be lifted up in death (Jn.3:14-16), or that His blood would procure forgiveness of sin (Matt. 26:28). So, by New Testament times Satan knew all this for sure. What he did not know was how far Christ's redemption would reach, how God's profound wisdom would exposed Satan's errors to his former heavenly hosts, and how greatly the AOG may promote Salvation in the ages to come.

## Summation

There are many known reasons for why a new Age was needed; most likely, there are still reasons we do not know. Several reasons were given above and are summarized below.

God had always planned for an additional Age to be added to the course of human history. However, the introduction of that Age required that conditions be just right, so that the introduction itself did not interfere with Christ's death. Ensuring Christ's death is clearly the most important reason for why God kept the Age of Grace a secret. The *just right* time for introducing the new Age was after Christ's death and just as the last days were beginning. At that precise time, Satan seemed on the verge of a major victory as time entered the last days. There was a very small window of opportunity during which the new Age could be introduced, but God planned for its introduction at that precise time.

The AOG was not something God dreamed up in reaction to world events, as if God were caught off guard or needed to make adjustments in the last minute. Before creation, God knew why and when a new Age was needed. He also knew it had to be hidden intentionally from us, and from Satan, so that His purpose could be accomplished. That which was a secret, a mystery to humans, was a truth hidden deep in the heart of God. The full accomplishments of Christ's death became part of human history as a result of God revealing that truth at just the right time. Accordingly, the most important event of all time, Christ's death, changed the course of human history. His death was designed to change the course of human history in a way Satan had not known.

Secular history has virtually ignored the mystery and His accomplishments, but the world would not be the same, nor would it still exist, if it were not a reality. Similarly, sacred history has found ways to ignore or subvert the teaching of the mystery; no doubt, Satan is at work as a minister of righteousness. Of course, Satan's ministry is not based upon correctly interpreted Scripture, but he does know how to present a message with a certain earthy appeal. He also knows how to promote and sell his religion under the guise of righteousness. Churches gobble up his false teachings because they have an aura of holiness, self-denial, and philanthropy, which the minister of righteousness sells to eager buyers (2 Cor. 11:15). We are too sophisticated to pray to wooden idols today, as worked for Satan in the past; in our Age, what works for him is a form of godliness and self-righteousness, all devoid of the truth revealed in the mystery.

The Age of Grace and its truth are what comprise the biblical mystery; secrecy was required to ensure the crucifixion occurred. After the crucifixion, the new Age was announced to humanity. Listed below are some of the major reasons, in tabular form for easy reference, as to why a new Age was needed.

The Age of Grace was needed:

1. so there would be the needed time for the blessings of the mystery to flow out to the entire world, and for the time needed for billions to enjoy those blessings;
2. for God to demonstrate His mercy and grace in spite of human failure, thereby, offering salvation to the world, without Israel's acceptance of Christ;
3. for God to interrupt the last days, which were just beginning, so that more people could be saved;
4. to display God's wisdom to the heavenly hosts, and to rescue humanity from the seeming victory of Satan;
5. to verify the accuracy of Scripture so that supposed prophetic errors, timeline problems, and inconsistencies could be seen to be accurate, right from the start;
6. to have an impact upon the ages to come, resulting in even more people being saved than we could have imagined; and
7. for human cultures to develop to the point they could make and incorporate discoveries that advanced civilization and the spread of the Gospel.



## PART 3

Recent Past and Today:

The Uncrucified Potential  
What “They” Could Not Know  
Why “They” Could Not Know  
How the Crucifixion Changed the World



## CHAPTER FIVE

# Uncrucified was Unacceptable

*It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter (Prov. 25:2).*

### Hidden Things and Choices

#### God Does Hide Things

The previous chapter was designed to show that the mystery, hidden in God, was the body of truth that constituted the Age of Grace (AOG). We may wonder why God hides things, and if more hidden truth is yet to come. Clearly, God does hide things and for good reasons: not to trick us, but to ultimately help us. Hiding the AOG was consistent with God's nature and character, since the purpose for hiding it was to ensure Christ's death—the ultimate act of love on our behalf. Without that death, there could be no forgiveness of sin. The prospect of an un-crucified Christ is the most dreadful possibility the human mind can conceive; it literally means a life in Hell for all of us.

Satan knew Christ's death was prophesied in the Bible, but he did not realize the full significance of that death, as occurs in our Age. God had to ensure that Christ did die, for that is the only means of forgiveness of sin. God and the spiritually inclined knew from the beginning that sin's penalty had to be paid at some time; however, until the penalty was paid, no sin could be truly forgiven. To ensure His death, God had to keep a secret, but hiding something is not anything new: *"Truly You are God, who hide Yourself"* (Isa. 45:15).

Several examples are given below, showing God does hide things. In the cases below, God had already revealed the truth, but veiled that truth in a way that the seeker had to study and search for it with the enlightenment of the Spirit. This notion stands in stark contrast to the mystery, which was unsearchable (Eph. 3:8), meaning no one (not even Satan) could find out about it since it had not been revealed. The point is this: God does hide things, sometimes from a person's understanding and sometimes by not revealing it in the first place.

1. In the Gospels the Lord spoke in parables for the very purpose of letting believers know the truth, while hiding that truth from unbelievers: *"And the disciples came and said to Him, 'Why do You speak to them in parables?' He answered and said to them, 'Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given'"* (Matt. 13:10-11).

The Lord's wisdom in doing this cannot be assailed; clearly, in such cases He veiled the truth from some people.

2. The Song of Solomon's true spiritual message is hidden within a love story.<sup>44</sup> This Song presents a love story that is hard to interpret, but within that love story is an intriguing and cleverly concealed spiritual message. Those with a heart yearning to see and hear will find it; the truth is there, just very difficult to discover.
3. To this day, Israel cannot see or hear the truth (true faith opens one's eyes) because a spirit of slumber and stupor hides the truth (Rom. 11:7-8). Spiritual blindness has struck Israel, but the day is coming when God will turn ungodliness away from Israel and they will see (Rom. 8:25-26). Their minds are blinded to truth, "*... For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ*" (2 Cor. 3:14b).
4. "*The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law*" (Deut. 29:29). In the Old Testament, some things were kept secret and some were revealed, according to God's wisdom.

### Why God Hides Things

We know God cannot lie and is always working for our benefit (Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18). When God hides something, it is not a deception or a lie. We hide eggs for an Easter egg hunt, and play hide and seek, as harmless ways to interact with children. Hiding something is not necessarily evil or deceptive. If a young boy or girl hears mature language or topics and asks what it means, we may be a bit evasive in order to protect him or her. Such evasiveness is not sinful, since it is done out of a desire to protect the innocent. God has much larger issues at stake than providing fun for us or protecting our innocent ears; when He hides something, it is for an eternal, spiritual reason. "*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!*" (Rom. 11:33).

God hides things at times, allowing people to exercise their freedom to search for the truth, or not. Those who have a heart yearning for the truth will find it, while those who want to play religious games will not. When God does not speak plainly, that may be our clue to listen more intently. Those who do not want to see or hear the truth can close their eyes and ears, as did the Pharisees in the Gospel records. The search for truth results in personal profit and self-fulfillment, as the seekers find and rejoice in the discovery of what God has secreted away. Incidentally, the quest of science to discover the truth hidden in the natural world is basically God ordained; it is the discovery of what God has done. Our quests to learn of the Word and nature as we seek the truth is part of the inherent, natural wonder He has implanted in humans as part of our design: "*But the glory of kings is to search out a matter*" (Prov. 25:2b).

The Lord uses various means to teach us, and sometimes we learn a lesson more assuredly if we have to search for it. Sometimes the search requires learning through life experiences, which are often a struggle. There are no short cuts for gaining experience in life, and as unpleasant as life struggles may be, they do have a fruitful outcome. For example, the pathway to hope and love starts with tribulation, that is, one must suffer in this life, to ultimately gain the character traits that lead to hope and love, "...

<sup>44</sup> Shober, Stephen F.; *The Song of Solomon—A Love Story with a Hidden Message*; Grace Publications, Inc.; Grand Rapids, MI; or eBook on Amazon or [www.grace4you.com](http://www.grace4you.com).



*we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Rom. 5:3-5).* Our natural instincts would suggest that suffering cannot lead to love, but God shows us how it happens, and that it is a godly process. The same can be said for finding hidden spiritual truths; our natural instincts can be very wrong. As we study the Word, spiritual truth is made known to us by the Spirit through a process that opens our eyes and ears (1 Cor. 2:12-14). God may conceal some things for the precise purpose that we might find them, for the quest itself makes a richer and more rewarding Christian life, consistent with Romans 5.

The difference between veiling a truth already revealed (for example, a parable) and the mystery, is the mystery could not be found by searching, not even by the most spiritual. The main reason God had to keep the AOG a top secret was so that Satan and the rulers of this world could not find it. No amount of study or spiritual maturity would allow anyone to find this secret, because it was not yet revealed. If it were revealed, Satan and the rulers would have made sure Christ was not crucified, which would have spelled doom for us all. So, God hid the mystery to ensure His plan would succeed; He did this for our benefit, and the results have eternal implications.

### **Satan's Choices**

We have no reason to suspect God keeps secrets for His own benefit or amusement. When God does hide things, he does so for our sake and for reasons often unknown or appreciated by us. However, a lot more is involved than just keeping a secret. God has to know, with certainty, all the possible outcomes resulting from keeping something secret, and all the possible outcomes resulting from the revelation of a formerly hidden truth. If He did not know all the possible outcomes, an outcome could occur that would negate His plan and desire. Not only do the possible outcomes have to be known, but the exact time to reveal a secret is equally important, in order to ensure others do not subvert the plan. Satan also has choices to make as he works to counter God's plans.

In the case of the mystery, God knew (foreknowledge) only four possible options were available for Satan and the earthly rulers, as shown in the simple chart below. Satan would make his choice depending upon what he knew and according to his own schemes. Two of the four possible options were not realistic, and two were realistic. The Bible makes it clear that options two and three were the only realistic choices in this spiritual battle (shown in bold). Notice the omniscience of our Lord; He knows what has to be hidden, how long it must be hidden, the adversary's options, and what choice the adversary will make. He had to know all the options to make certain His plan would work as designed. The numbered items in the chart below are explained briefly after the chart. The mystery is divided into two options, known and unknown, and the crucifixion is divided into two options: to crucify (yes) and not to crucify (no).

**The Four Options Related to the Mystery and the Crucifixion**

		<u>Mystery</u>	
		Known	Not Known
<u>Crucifixion</u>	Yes	1 Not Realistic	2 <b>What Happened</b>
	No	3 <b>Could have happened</b>	4 Not realistic

- 1. First non-realistic option (1):** this option assumes that if the mystery were known, Satan still would have proceeded to crucify Christ. The Bible does not give this as a reasonable option, since it was not an option Satan would choose. This option was too obvious of a defeat by playing into God's hand. To choose this option meant that Satan would have known what God was planning to do and then just went along with it.
- 2. What actually happened (2):** this option contends that if the mystery were *not known*, Satan would have proceeded to crucify Christ. Indeed this is exactly what happened, that is, Satan and the earthly rulers did not know of the mystery, so they proceeded with His crucifixion. In Satan's mind this was the best option, even though he knew God had planned Christ's death. Everything was going in his favor at the time. In Satan's mind, Salvation would affect only a limited number of people, the chosen nation would be rejected, he could hurt God the Father and the Son, his evil nature would be satisfied, the crucifixion would display of his power to the heavenly hosts, and his losses would be minimal. Since he did not know of the AOG, biblical prophecy indicated there was little time before the last days, so few people would be saved. God needed Satan to think this option was the best; indeed, that it was his own choice. This apparent victory for Satan after thousands of years of trying was his last chance.
- 3. What could have happened (3):** in this option, if the mystery were known, Satan would not have crucified Christ. *God could not allow this option to occur under any circumstances.* If Satan and the earthly rulers knew of the secret, they would not have worked for Christ's death: *"for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."* From Satan's perspective, had he known the mystery, that death would have had to be prevented, at all cost. He had to prevent multitudes from being saved in our Age, prevent the demonstration of God's wisdom to the angelic hosts, and ensure he was not defamed before his former associates. God could not allow Satan to make this choice, so God kept a secret from him, angels, mankind, and any mention in the Bible, until the perfect time. This was the most guarded, top secret plan in all of history. Had it leaked out, none of us would be saved. The need for secrecy in this matter makes the Manhattan Project look like child's play.
- 4. Second non-realistic option (4):** this option assumes that if the mystery were not known, Satan would not have crucified Christ. This is not a realistic option because God knew Satan would not choose this option; indeed, he did not choose it even though he could have. Satan was too proud, too desirous of power, and the eternal battle too intense for Satan to choose this option.

## Why Satan Was Willing to Have Christ Crucified

Satan could have refused to participate in Christ's death, and that meant no person could be forgiven (saved), which seemingly would be a triumph for Satan. He knew Jesus was the Promised One, that Christ came to die, and that His death would provide redemption. What he did not know was the true depth of God's redemptive plan (contained in the mystery). He did not know of the Age of Grace or how that Age would change the world. The depth of redemption's plan—the full accomplishment—is the key to "why" Satan would not have crucified Christ had he known of the mystery.

Satan forged ahead and crucified Christ, knowing full well that Jesus was the Messiah and that His death would provide redemption. Why would he be so foolish? What did he have to gain by having the rulers kill Christ? Perhaps Satan thought he was winning the eternal battle, and by getting Christ on the Cross, his plan was prevailing. (All we know of his plan is that it is false, deceptive, and anti-God.) Satan's maneuvering makes some sense. After all, Satan had the majority of people in unbelief, Christ was rejected by His own chosen nation, the Gentiles were basically unsaved, and Satan likely knew the Holy Spirit soon would be rejected. With the chosen nation in rebellion and on Satan's side, and the human rulers of this world wanting to crucify the imposter, the time was right for Satan to strike while the iron was hot, taking advantage of the situation to crucify his foe.

Perhaps Satan took consolation in the fact that all of God's previous ages seemed to have ended in failure. During the various ages, God had dispensed His grace by various means, but every time humans failed.<sup>45</sup> In every previous age, God required faith and some act of obedience, for example, having faith plus offering a sacrifice. There were many people saved in this manner, but, in general, each age ended in failure because of human lack of faith and disobedience. Over the expanses of time, God had systematically shown His grace could not be dispensed based upon human faithfulness or merit. In fact, the purpose of the various ages was to show that if God were to save humans by His grace, such Salvation would have to be entirely dependent upon Him and not on any human merit. Satan perhaps thought every age ended in failure, but that is not quite true, for God was demonstrating a profound truth:

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*Faith plus anything involving human merit will always result in failure.*

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That truth is what God wanted humans to grasp: if we were to be saved, it would have to be entirely by God's grace, with no human merit involved. Satan saw the failures of mankind throughout history as a rejection of God; God saw the same failures as the reason to introduce the new Age He always had in mind. Satan did not know God had yet one more age in store, or in that age His grace would be dispensed solely on the basis of faith. Over the millennia leading to His death, not many truly had trusted in God; so, while Satan may have thought he had succeeded and had changed the course of human destiny, God had one last secret in His mind that would change everything.

Satan's goal is to subvert anything God wants or has prophesied. Understanding Satan's desired outcome, we want to explore possible reasons as to why Satan wanted to crucify Christ, knowing full well that God also wanted Christ crucified. The whole scenario is troubling because, for the most important event in history, Satan and God seemed to agree. However, one very powerful reason for Satan's proceeding with the crucifixion is that he did not understand the full significance of Christ's

<sup>45</sup>The word dispensation is often used to refer to how God dispenses, gives out, His grace. See Addendum to this chapter.

death. Thus, the mystery changed human destiny in ways Satan could not foresee. As a teaser for the coming chapters, Satan did not know how many people would be saved in the secret Age, or (perhaps) that Christ's blood would be applied retroactively to save believers before Christ, or that the lessons learned during our Age may help Israel's future evangelistic endeavors during the Kingdom.

We can be certain of several reasons why Satan wanted to crucify Christ:

- *Revenge*: Satan wanted to avenge his disgrace and fall, when he was expelled from Heaven (Ezek. 28:14-17, Isa. 14:12-15). He was the anointed cherub and was perfect in his ways from the day he was created. He had a high position in Heaven, perhaps the highest. He was the anointed cherub who covered the throne of God, apparently a reference to his former role ensuring the sanctity of the throne. Then iniquity was found in him, and he was cast out of Heaven with many of his cohorts. The guardian cherub was found to be full of pride, a murderer, and a liar; therefore, he lost his heavenly home and status. God says, *"I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, That they might gaze at you"* (Ezek. 28:17b). Being cast out of Heaven embarrassed and belittled him before the angels and other cherubim, not only in Heaven, but humiliated him before earthly kings. He has never forgotten his fall from grace and has always wanted to avenge his disgrace, and to prove, especially to those angles who followed him, that he is a true deity (even heir to the throne?).
- *Hatred*: Satan's hatred of God compelled him to take every opportunity to destroy or hurt Christ.
- *Subverting Scripture*: Harming Christ and somehow denying/perverting Scripture are his main goals. Therefore, going ahead with the crucifixion was ingrained in his very nature and the very object of his evil passion.
- *The Lie*: Satan appeared to be doing more than bruising Christ's heel (Gen. 3:15); he seemed to be winning the battle. As the father of lies (Jn. 8:44), the crucifixion had every appearance of Satanic victory and proof to the heavenly hosts that he was the superior being. His first lie was *"I will be like the Most High"* (Isa. 14:14). He claimed to be the firstborn, the rightful heir of creation, and disputed the right of Christ to reign.<sup>46</sup> Satan may not be the instigator of all lies, but he is the father of *the lie* that Christ was not the Messiah and we should worship the god of humanity, who is Satan incarnate.

### **The Uncrucified Christ**

To recapitulate, the Scripture makes it clear the crucifixion of Christ had to occur at all costs, since it was the keystone of God's redemptive plan for mankind. However, had the rulers known the full significance of His death, they would not have crucified Him, *"...which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory"* (1 Cor. 2:8). Thus, to make His plan work, God was willing to keep a secret from everyone for thousands of years, thereby, ensuring the crucifixion did occur, and at just the right time. To proceed in a logical manner, we need to look into the matter of what would have happened if Christ had not been crucified, for the crucifixion and forgiveness are inextricably bound together.

<sup>46</sup>Anderson, Robert; *The Silence of God*; Kregel Publications; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1965.

As a note of clarification as we proceed, the Bible uses various terms to refer to Christ's death: the Cross, His death, the blood, the crucifixion, and similar terms. Although various terms are used, each with a different aspect in meaning, they all refer to the same event—His death. Similarly, these various terms will be used here to refer to His death. There are also many theological concepts related to Christ's death (justification, forgiveness, redemption, etc.). All these concepts will not be considered in this book in order to keep the discussion on track; however, we will consider one factor related to the Cross—forgiveness. Forgiveness will be used to establish the significance of Christ's death.

Sin incurs a debt, and that debt is called the “wages of sin.” Forgiveness of sin requires the full payment of the debt. Thus, forgiveness is the complete removal of the penalty and consequences of sin, achieved by the required payment of the incurred debt. Sin cannot be overlooked or ignored; the penalty for sin has to be dealt with in a righteous manner if a person is to be declared righteous and receive God’s Salvation. However, to understand forgiveness, we must realize there is a profound difference between forgiveness and atonement, that topic will be considered next.

The biblical word *atonement* means to cover up sin, and that is what animal sacrifices provided. Over the millennia before Christ, the sins of humans were covered up by the blood of animal sacrifices, which was a way to temporarily deal with sin. However, we know from Scripture that it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to actually forgive sin (Heb. 10:3-4). So, animal sacrifices were temporary expediences to hide sin, so that it was covered up, but these sacrifices never forgave the sins by removing the penalty or consequences. Since sin was only covered up under the Law, each day resulted in more and more sin being covered. On a worldwide basis, the total amount of unforgiven sin kept growing; correspondingly, the unpaid debt kept accumulating. The ever-increasing load of sin, the sin-load of the world, would have to be borne by the ultimate sin-bearer. Sometime, all that sin had to be forgiven by paying the penalty in full.

Until the time of Christ, sins were atoned and true forgiveness awaited His sacrificial death. Thus, the sins of the entire world since Adam were unforgiven. It is His blood (death), and His alone, that could pay the price for sin. If Christ had not been crucified, then no person's sins could be dealt with in a righteous manner, meaning they could not be forgiven. God is just, which means He cannot overlook, brush aside, or forever cover sins. Eventually, the penalty had to be paid in full measure. If the penalty were not paid, then God could not forgive sin, since to forgive sin without due payment would mean God was not holy and just. Atonement did give humans hope and offered them assurance, but the responsibility was on God to provide forgiveness, if humans were to be saved.

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*What is the worst thing that could have ever happened in all of human history?*  
(answered at end of chapter)

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## **The Scapegoat Example**

In Leviticus 16:7-9, 21-22, Moses describes a sacrifice involving two goats. This sacrificial process was a great teacher of what God wanted people to understand, so they knew what was really happening. One of the goats was sacrificed to provide a covering (atonement) for sin, but the other goat was the scapegoat. " 'Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness' " (Lev.

16:21-22). The scapegoat was not killed, and every believer would hopefully understand this goat taught what was really happening in God's sight.

The High Priest would place both hands on the scapegoat, confess the sins of the people, and then the goat—laden with the sins of others (a substitute), but not its own—was sent into the wilderness. This was the *scapegoat*. The people's sins were transferred to the innocent scapegoat, which then carried the sins away into the wilderness, never to be seen again. The sins were out of sight, no longer to be remembered by the people. After the goat was released, God could act mercifully to the people because the scapegoat was an atonement that allowed God and humans to be temporarily reconciled. Sin was taken out of the sight of humans, but God could still see the scapegoat. Although humans felt at ease over this atonement, the sin was in perfect view of God; it still existed. True resolution of the sin problem waited for the day when God's righteousness and justice were vindicated, that is, the day when Someone truly would make it possible to take sin away and wipe it out forever. The scapegoat was a symbol of animal sacrifices, and the human perception of out of sight, out of mind. The scapegoat taught that a real Sin-bearer had to come, Who really could take away the sins of the world, by Himself.



**Figure 5.1.** Both hands were placed on the innocent goat's head and the sins of the people were confessed. The scapegoat was released and bore the sins of the people into the wilderness. Note: sin was not forgiven, but it was out of sight.

### David's Experience

Three Hebrew words used in the Old Testament (OT) are translated in some form of the words *forgive*, *pardon*, or *remit* (pardon is generally the idea represented).<sup>47 48</sup> The idea in the Old Testament when one of these words is used is that sin was *covered (atoned) or pardoned*. Remember, a pardoned criminal is free from the penalty and consequences of his or her crimes, but is still guilty. The OT saints were pardoned which was fantastic news for them. However, they were still guilty, and their sin was not dealt with in a manner consistent with true justice. So, from a human viewpoint, a person's sins were gone, removed as far as the east is from the west. The sinner was pardoned, which gave great comfort; however, in God's impeccable books, each of those sins was still shown, and after each sin were these words, in bold, capital, red letters **"NOT PAID."** Pardon and true forgiveness are two different things, but humans could rejoice in His mercy as a result of faith and offering a sacrifice.

<sup>47</sup> Brown, Francis; The New Brown – Driver – Briggs - Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon; Associated Publishers and Authors, Inc.; LaFayette, Indiana; 1978.

<sup>48</sup> Wilson, William; Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies; Mac Donald Publishing Co; McLean, VA.

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*Mankind's conscience was placated, but God's justice was not.*

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At this point, we can better understand what David meant when he said, "*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered*" (Psa 32:1). We see David says in one phrase that the sinner's transgression is forgiven, and then in the very next phrase says the sin is covered. The second phrase interprets the first, showing that *forgiven* really means his sin was *covered (atoned)*. The first phrase shows the sinner's perspective of forgiven transgressions, while the second phrase gives God's perspective of covered sin. David realized God covered his sins, and rejoiced that God treated him as though they were forgiven. In reality, his sins were sent into the wilderness, or swept under the proverbial rug; sin was not yet dealt with in a just manner since the penalty was not paid.

### Forgiveness vs. Atonement

Consider this analogy.<sup>49</sup> Animal sacrifices provided atonement for sin, a temporary covering, much like sweeping the floor and then sweeping the dirt under a rug. The dirt (sin) was covered (rug), but it still existed (see Figure 5.2). Year after year, animal blood was offered to allow God to cover the sins (symbolically hiding them under the rug). This hid the sin from human sight, just as the scapegoat took sin out of sight; however, the goat did nothing about the sin, which is God's perspective. Out of sight appears to be forgiveness to us, but out of sight is not out of mind for our Lord; sin's penalty had to be paid. The day of reckoning had to occur sometime.



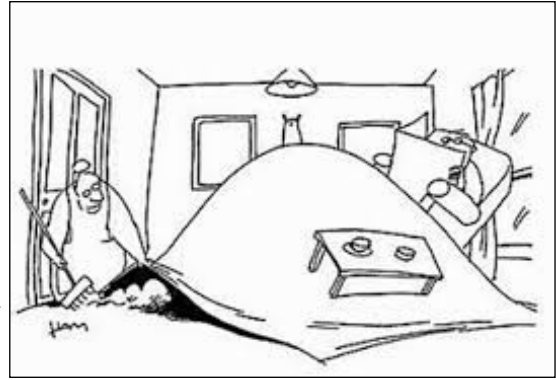
**Figure 5.2.** This is a simple analogy of atonement. Sin is represented by dirt and animal sacrifices by a rug. Sin could be covered by animal sacrifices, like sweeping dirt under a rug. However, it could not be forgiven; it still existed even if not seen.

In our analogy, the accumulated sins for millennia would have made a huge pile of dirt, barely covered by a rug. By the time of Christ, the situation was even worse, more like a mountain of sin with a little rug on top trying to cover it up. However, a day was coming when "*I will remember your sins no more*" (Jer. 31:34). Animal blood

provided atonement for human sin, but how long could atonement continue, and how much blood could be shed just to cover sin?

<sup>49</sup> Grace 4 You Ministries, Adults Studies 14 and 15, Forgiveness; [www.grace4you.com](http://www.grace4you.com).

**Figure 5.3.** Covering sins for thousands of years is somewhat represented in this cartoon.



A very crude estimate will be presented here to show how much animal blood was shed to provide atonement for the sins of the world. The purpose of considering the amount of animal blood shed is not to gross you out, but to gain a perspective on what God knew and the angels in Heaven saw. A correct perspective helps us see the necessity of Christ's death, so that something was finally done about sin. The calculations and data used to make this estimate are not

all shown. The estimate is on the conservative side, that is, the analysis is not inflated to make the estimate large; instead, the analysis is intentionally kept on the small side. The estimate used actual data when they were available, but some assumptions were needed. Even though the estimate was based upon conservative assumptions and facts, it is only used here to make a point. Thus, the estimate is not to be used as any sort of standard or established fact, but merely considered to be a value within the realm of reason. Since the estimate is conservative, we can confidently say it lies within a range of values, even the lowest of which indicates an incredible amount of animal blood was shed to cover sin.

Israel's required national sacrifices for sin (Passover, Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles) were made annually. Each year no less than 1,246 animals had to die (bulls, goats, lambs, pigeons, and rams), and the estimated blood that was shed amounted to 1,400 gallons each year.<sup>50</sup> From the Exodus and the giving of the Law, there were some 1,500 years until Christ. In those 1,500 years, the national required sacrifices demanded around *2,000,000 gallons of blood* (1,500 years times 1,400 gallons per year). This is a very low estimate, because the sacrifices from Adam until the Exodus are not included; recall God had to kill an animal(s) to make a covering for Adam and Eve after they sinned, Noah offered a sacrifice, and so on. The two million gallons of blood provided a covering, but that is just the start.

In addition to national sacrifices, there were voluntary, personal sacrifices (burnt, sin/trespass, peace offerings...) and most of these required animal sacrifices. During the 1,500 years from the Exodus to Christ, Israel's average population was around five million.<sup>51</sup> Personal sacrifices were generally made for the entire family. Family size could be large, but then, some families were only two older people or one surviving spouse. We will assume an average of five persons per family, meaning an average of one million families existed, at any one time in Israel during that period. Those one million families would have made personal sacrifices, the number per year depending upon a host of factors. Based upon animal size and the amount of blood in the various animals, the estimated animal blood shed per year by each family was approximately twelve gallons.<sup>52</sup> Now the big assumption: how many families actually offered animal sacrifices? During times of national revival and godly kings, the percentage would be fairly high. During times of national backsliding, captivity, and worshipping of other gods, the percentage would be low. There is also the matter of the division of the Kingdom in 975 BC, which complicates matters, but even then, sacrifices were often offered at various locations outside Jerusalem.

Remember the goal here is to derive an estimate that is conservative, a low value, but which reasonably represents the true, unknown value. Accordingly, a low value for the number of families that offered sacrifices will be assumed. A low value of ten percent (10%) was used, meaning only one family out of ten offered animal sacrifices. The final estimate for personal sacrifices over 1,500 years amounted to

<sup>50</sup> Jewish Encyclopedia.com; Article 12984 - Sacrifice.

<sup>51</sup> World Population Estimates (see Wikipedia commons).

<sup>52</sup> The 12-gallons figure is based upon four personal sacrifices per year, times three gallons of blood for the average animal.



*two billion (2,000,000,000) gallons of blood*, not including the two million gallons required for national sacrifices. In addition, the two billion gallons does not consider special sacrifices, such as the 144,000 animals Solomon sacrificed in First Kings 8:63.

The total of over 2,000,000,000 (2 billion) gallons is hard to comprehend. An Olympic-sized swimming pool is 164 feet by 82 feet by 6.6 feet, and holds 660,430 gallons. The two billion gallons amounts to *3,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools full of blood*. How many sins did all this blood forgive?

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*Billions of gallons of blood were shed, and not one single sin was forgiven!*

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### **God's One Choice**

#### **The Righteous Solution**

After millennia of covering sin, perhaps even the angels in Heaven wondered, "How could a righteous God keep sweeping dirt under the rug, and refrain to judge it"? Millions of people had offered animal sacrifices for thousands of years. In that time, billions of gallons of animal blood had been shed to cover those sins. Animal blood did its job; it covered them. However, all that blood never forgave one sin. *Not a single one!*

Finally, at the proper time, God sent His Son into this insignificant world for one primary purpose: to make the ultimate sacrifice with His own blood. This is what Romans 3:25 addresses: *"whom God set forth as a propitiation (mercy seat) by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed."* God sent His Son to die for us, which allowed God to act propitiously (with mercy because of His Son's death). His death allowed the sins of the past, which God forbore (refrained) to judge, finally to be forgiven. In the past, the countless number of sins (of believers) had been passed over by God in His forbearance.<sup>53</sup> He forbore to judge those sins until they could be forgiven justly. That could only happen when the price had been paid for each one. If He judged them before Christ's death, the believer's sin debt would not be paid; the person would have to pay the price for his or her own sin, which is impossible and could only lead to spiritual death.

Upon His death, forgiveness was possible for the first time (no more covering of sin). The sin-load of the world was washed away. The blood of the Lamb was applied to the heavenly Mercy Seat and God finally could pronounce sinners free from guilt and blame. The dirt under the rug finally, actually, completely, was gotten rid of, and the price was paid for each speck. Now God was clearly just (His justice demanded payment) and the justifier (He paid the price Himself, as the justifier). He had withheld judgment since the beginning, but with Christ's death, the blood could be applied retroactively to past times to forgive

<sup>53</sup> The term, "the sins that were previously committed," refers to all the sins of all believers before the Cross, i.e., the sins committed before (previous to) the Cross. The text is not referring to our sins committed before we believed, as though God forgives our past sins but somehow we have to pay for our future sins. The text is referring to all believers in all of history, not to any particular person. Each believer today has all his or her sins forgiven (past, present, and future), but that is not the point of this passage.

the sins of the past. Similarly, Christ's blood is applied to the future, to proactively forgive the sins of believers, including their future sins.

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*Christ's blood is retroactive and proactive,  
forgiving the sins of all past and future believers.*

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## God's Perspective

If Christ had not paid the price, no one's sins could be forgiven. There would be no Salvation, and everyone would be condemned to Hell. The lack of Salvation was totally unacceptable to God, necessitating Christ's death at all costs. The rulers<sup>54</sup> of this world were very willing to participate in Christ's death when they did not know about the mystery because the number of believers was minimal at that time, and even God's specially chosen nation had rejected Him. Surely, Satan thought he was winning the eternal battle with God (first proclaimed in Gen. 3:15) because Christ had been rejected, the chosen nation was in rebellion and on Satan's side, all of God's dispensations seemed to end in failure, and soon the Holy Spirit would be rejected (Acts 7). Satan was getting the upper hand. From all that he knew, he was certainly doing more than bruising Christ's heel; he seemed to be the victor!

The mystery changed the whole scenario, and a huge number of people became saved, which Satan never could have imagined based upon what he knew. The AOG resulted in believers receiving Salvation and God's spiritual blessings ahead of due time, that is, before the prophesied time (Rom. 15:27). According to prophesy, the nations were to be saved as a result of Israel's conversion; however, with Israel's conversion a bleak prospect, the nations were not going to receive Salvation or blessings, an outcome that was not acceptable to God. Indeed, He knew this would happen, so He had a secret plan to save mankind, in spite of Israel's rejection; therefore, He had to keep His plan hidden. God chose this one option from the beginning, planned for it, and ensured its success.

God knew Christ's blood would be applied retroactively to forgive all the sins of past believers, and proactively for future believers. We have to wonder if Satan knew of the retroactive application of His blood, or did God keep this plan from Satan? From God's perspective, the "for all times" use of His blood is phenomenal, resulting in billions of people's Salvation, and Satan may not have known of it. God's choice was to save us by His grace, regardless of any human failures, including those of Israel.

God ensured Salvation was possible in our Age, even with Israel's fall/rejection; in addition, He will be using our Age for future purposes, which refer to the earthly Kingdom and the ministry that occurs at that time. The concept that our Age will be used by God to minister of His glory and greatness in future ages is important to grasp. Just to be clear, our Age is presently being used by God to teach the heavenly hosts of His wisdom and will be used in future ages, as we will see.

The Church is the spiritual body of believers in the AOG, and it is through the church that the heavenly hosts are learning, today, of the *many-sided* wisdom of God, *"to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Eph. 3:10-11). The heavenly hosts are being taught of his wisdom based upon what He is doing today, and there is the distinct possibility that the lessons taught by God during the AOG may transfer into the future and have

<sup>54</sup> These rulers may be earthly rulers; however it was Satan who was the power behind them.

application during the Kingdom, greatly augmenting Israel's ministry. Thus, He will be using our Age for future purposes, which will be discussed in Chapter 7.

### Christ Had to Die at the Right Time

God knew the perfect time to offer His Son as the sin-bearer of the world. God waited and waited, for thousands of years, refraining to judge sin, but instead covered sin up with the blood of animal sacrifices. He forebear to judge sin until the time was just right.<sup>55</sup> At the right time, Christ was brought into the world: "*But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law*" (Gal. 4:4). Shortly thereafter, the right time for His death came: "*For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly*" (Rom 5:6). The terms *fullness of time* and *due time* show an advancement in what was occurring. When the time was right, based upon a multitude of reasons only God knew, Jesus entered the world as a baby. When the time was right, appropriate for His death, then that occurred. So, these two terms, *the fullness of time and due time*, teach us God had a clock, so to speak, that determined the correct timing of events. Countless events had to be coordinated to make His birth and death occur at the precise time God previously had ordained.

Paul refers to himself "... *as by one born out of due time.*" He is referring to his conversion, which was similar to a baby being born before full-term pregnancy (1 Cor. 15:8), due time. He was converted prematurely, presumably referring to being converted before Israel's future conversion. Israel's future conversion would be the due time, but Paul was converted before (out of) that event. God brought about his conversion unexpectedly, and prematurely, because God needed him before *due time* (Israel's conversion) so he could function as the person to whom the mystery would be revealed. In general, biblical references to *due time*, are to a time when events are reaching a point where a dramatic change is about to occur. Thus, in due time Christ died for us, which truly was a dramatic change!

*The terms fullness of time and due time need to be expounded (also see the Addendum to this chapter). The meaning of these terms is made clearer in Ephesians: "according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth—in Him"* (Eph. 1:9-10).<sup>56</sup> The terms *fullness of time(s)* and *due time* refer to an appointed period when something new was just about to occur, as in Galatians 4:4, Romans 5:6, and Ephesians 1:10.<sup>57</sup> Accordingly, the dispensation of the fullness of times is not some future dispensation or age, as generally taught. The dispensation of the fullness of times is an expression referring to how God is dealing with us now, in the Age of Grace. The dispensation of the fullness of time refers to how God is dispensing His grace and administering the truth of the mystery now that His plan's time has come, that is, has been fully revealed.

When the *fullness of time* came (according to God's clock, when the general state of world affairs was opportune for God's purpose), Jesus was born. During His life, Jesus had to prove Himself to be a perfect Lamb, acceptable unto God, before He was qualified to be the sin-bearer of the world. God's Lamb had

<sup>55</sup> "Just right" is a term that reminds us the fairy tale of Goldilocks, who always found baby bear's things just right. In Chapter 2, we were introduced to the Goldilocks Zone, the small zone in a hostile universe where everything is just right for human life.

<sup>56</sup> A dispensation, as used here, signifies the dispensing of something, such as a pharmaceutical store dispensing medicines. A dispensation is not a time period, or an age, but generally denotes stewardship and administrative responsibility (see Addendum to this chapter). In the dispensation of the fullness of times, God is dispensing truth and grace, so that all things are gathered together in Christ.

<sup>57</sup> Vine, W. E.; *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*; Fleming H. Revell Company; Old Tappan, New Jersey; 1966.

to be perfect in body, soul, and spirit. In body, Christ had to be like any other animal sacrifice, without spot, blemish, or imperfection: *"And whoever offers a sacrifice ... it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it"* (Lev. 22:21, 17:11; Num. 19:2, 28:3). In order to be physically perfect, Jesus had to protect Himself from physical damage. For example, He could not be thrown down a steep hill (Lk. 4:30) or stoned by the people (Jn. 8:59); scars and broken bones do not fit the requirements. He had to prove throughout His life He was perfect in soul, that is, perfect in character, attitude, thoughts, values, conscience.... Finally, He had to be perfect in spirit, which means being without sin. To be perfect in spirit, He had to live a perfectly sinless life, including being tried by the best tempter while in a weakened condition—His forty-day temptation (Mk. 1:3). He proved, to God's satisfaction, that He was perfect in body, soul, and spirit during His life on earth.

## Due Time

Proving Himself to be the spotless Lamb of God took time, so He could not be crucified at "just any ol' time." He could only be crucified when the Father accepted Him as a worthy sacrifice, just as a priest had to accept an animal as being fit for a sacrifice. John referred to Him as the Lamb of God (Jn. 1:29), and the Father acknowledged His perfection when He said, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (Matt. 3:17b). The Father's final acceptance is found recorded in the Word, *"... without spot..."* (Heb. 9:14), and *"... as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"* (1 Pt. 1:19). As the proven, perfect Lamb of God, He was accepted—this was the *due time*. When the due time came, Christ died for us.

The spotless Lamb of God became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). All the sin of the world was placed upon Him, the world's substitute. His death forgives the sins of anyone who believes in Him; however, He did not become a sinner, but a sin-bearer. He became sin for us, our sin-bearing substitute; however, a sinner would not be an acceptable substitute. When He became sin, the Father could not even look upon His own Son, righteousness demanding God to forsake Him (Matt. 27:46). Upon His death, the believer's sin penalty and all the consequences were completely and forever forgiven—*paid in full*.

Now, in the dispensation of the *fullness of the times*, God is dispensing His grace based upon the truth contained within the mystery. Each of these three steps (birth, death, dispensing grace and truth) are progressive, and each depends upon the previous step having been completed. These three steps unite to provide the fullness of Christ's actions in securing our Salvation, and the full depth of His plan for humans. In our Age, the mystery has been revealed and we now experience the full measure of what His death means. The final step, the dispensation of the fullness of time, is what is occurring today and in the AOG, *"that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him"* (Eph. 1:10). Ephesians 1:10 is a continuing theme in Ephesians, of Gentiles being brought to Christ (*"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ"* [Eph. 2:13]), and reconciling both Jew and Gentile in one body of believers (*"and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity"* [Eph. 2:16]). The connection of the dispensation of the fullness of time with the heavenly places and hosts is seen in Ephesians 1:3 and 3:10, providing evidence Paul is speaking of the AOG.

The events leading to the defeat of Satan were based upon actions occurring at the correct time, in *due time*. In the next chapter we will see Satan tried many times to kill Christ and never succeeded when it was not due time. When the fullness of time came and when due time arrived, Satan succeeded, or so he thought, but he really fell into doing what God had ordained from the beginning. Satan never dreamed of a new Age, in which billions would be saved from all nations. Nor did he envision that those saved

would be made part of one body in Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Nor did he see any of the marvels our Age, for if he had, well, we know what could have happened.

So, as we end this chapter, God, Christ, Satan, and the earthly rulers all seem to be en route to one event: THE event. They seemed to be in agreement, for the first time in history. An apt analogy will be presented later, for now consider this: over two thousand years ago there was a *due time* in history, at that time there was an unbelievable agreement between all the major actors in a play. The main event of all times was at hand, the players agreed; *Christ must die!* God required that death because His justice and righteousness demanded it; Christ insisted upon it because He loved mankind and wanted to provide a means of Salvation; Satan was delighted he could inflict pain on God/Christ and bring history to a close; and the pawns just moved as directed. However, as each actor moved to that one event, they moved with ulterior motives.

God's and Christ's motives were pure and honorable, as they approached the Cross. Satan's motives were not, and the rulers followed their leader, taking great delight in crucifying an imposter. Satan is very intelligent and knows Scripture, so what was he thinking he could accomplish? Satan knew he would end up in the Lake of Fire, but, in spite of that, anything he could do to subvert God's plan seemed to be a victory. Satan knew that one-third of Israel would make it through the last days to enter the Kingdom (Zech. 13:8-9). However, the number of people and nations outside of Israel who would get into the Kingdom was not stated in Scripture. As you may recall, people and nations who are unsaved will get into the Kingdom based upon their treatment of Israel; these people will be the object of Israel's evangelistic endeavors in the Kingdom. However, the number of such persons apparently can be influenced by his schemes. So, did Satan proceed with the notion he could win over people and nations (as he historically had done) and keep them out of the Kingdom? If there were fewer in the Kingdom, there would be fewer to be converted by Israel. His plan is unclear, but God and Christ proceeded to the Cross knowing a secret that would completely reverse Satan's scheme, whatever it was. One result of the secret was that many gentiles would be saved in spite of Israel's rejection of Christ, and, these people will be saved before the prophesied time. Satan did not know this secret. However, the nagging issue of why Satan would not have crucified Christ, had he known the mystery, is still unclear.

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*The worst thing that could have ever happened in  
all of human history would have been an empty Cross.*

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## Addendum to Chapter 5

### The Dispensation of the Fullness of Time

Ephesians 1:10 reads, *"that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him."* There are various views concerning the phrase "the dispensation of the fullness of times." The view taken here is the dispensation of the fullness of times expresses God's administration of the truth of the mystery, which takes place during the Age of Grace.

Some people contend that the dispensation of the fullness of times is a future age or period. Slight variations in biblical wording and eschatological beliefs have helped create confusion and differing opinions. Of course, a dispensation is not a time period; nevertheless, it will occur in some time period. Since the phrase, "the dispensation of the fullness of times," is not the same as, "the dispensation of the grace of God," some have supposed the two are not the same. Thus, it is reasoned, the first phrase must take place in some time period other than the dispensation of grace. The difference in wording is taken as evidence Ephesians 1:10 is referring to events in a future time or dispensation. However, this argument is extremely weak, as evidenced by Paul's use of different terms for the same thing when he refers to the Gospel as: my Gospel (Rom. 16:25), Gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24), Gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 4:3), our Gospel (2 Cor. 9:13) and, Gospel of peace (Eph. 6:15).

An additional factor in this discussion is the fact God uses numbers very wisely in the Bible. The number seven is the number of Divine perfection. Accordingly, some suppose, there must be seven dispensations in total, proving Divine perfection in God's eternal plan. Hmmm, seems like we heard of the Divine perfection argument before, in connection with the extinction of dinosaurs and perfectly circular planetary orbits, in Chapter One. The Divine perfection argument has value, but can also be used to derive false conclusions, as we have seen. Brief mention of this argument is needed in connection with dispensations. The Age of Grace is generally considered to be connected with the sixth dispensation, and the earthly Kingdom to the seventh. The term "fullness of time" seems to suggest finality; thus, it is connected to the last, seventh, dispensation. This notion is not supported by Scripture and confuses Israel's hope (the Kingdom) with the Church's hope (Heaven). If differences in wording mean two phrases cannot refer to the same event or thing, then the dispensation of the fullness of times cannot any more refer to the Kingdom than to the dispensation of grace. If a person believes there must be seven dispensations to show Divine perfection, well, there would still be seven dispensations if the phrase referred to the Age of Grace. Such arguments are made, not to elucidate the Word, but to serve as an apologetic for human belief systems. We will see the dispensation of the fullness of times does refer to dispensing the last, final truth God has for humans, and that this takes place in the Age of Grace.

We do not mistake Galatians 4:4 with some future time period, just because of the phrase fullness of time, *"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law."* Nor should we confuse Paul's use of that phrase with the future. In fact, Galatians 4:4 and Ephesians 1:10 show clearly, decisively, that the same phrase can refer to different time periods.

The Greek word from which we get the word dispensation is *oikonomia*, and, in general, signifies the management of a household or the affairs of a household (*oikos*, is house; *nomos*, a law). The Greek word is often translated *stewardship*, that is, the management or administration of something. In general terms, a dispensation refers to the means by which God dispenses (gives out, manages, or administers)

His grace and truth. A dispensation is not a time period or age. Since the way God deals with us does occur during a time period, we often think of a dispensation in terms of time, which is not correct. The primary emphasis is on dispensing or managing something, generally referring to how God is dispensing His grace or truth. Similarly, the mystery is not an age, per se, but the body of truth that pertains to a certain age.

To make sure there is clarity on the meaning of the word dispensation, consider the example of marriage. A definition of marriage would have to contain the idea of the union between a man and woman. While marriage does occur during some period of time, time is not part of the definition because it does not define the essence of marriage. Similarly, the essence of a dispensation is the way God is dealing with us, or His stewardship, not the time period involved. In the dispensation of the fullness of times, God is dispensing the truth of what He has done, so that He might gather together all things in Christ. He is doing this because the full time has come, that is, the time is completely right for us to understand all He has done.

There are four references to the word dispensation in the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible and two references in the New King James Version. The KJV translation is shown in the bullet points below because it uses the word dispensation most often.

- Eph. 1:10, "that in the dispensation of the fullness of times"
- 1 Cor. 9:17, "a dispensation of *the gospel* is committed unto me" (translated *stewardship* in NKJV)
- Eph. 3:2, "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God"
- Col. 1:25, "according to the dispensation of God" (translated *stewardship* in NKJV)

The four references to the word dispensation are used in four different phrases, and each of the four phrases has a difference in meaning. Again, a dispensation is about dispensing, giving something out, not about a time period. Thus, to say the dispensation of the fullness of time refers to Heaven or the Kingdom is to confuse dispensing something with the time period during which it is dispensed. For example, a dispensary administers the giving out of medicine, but the term dispensary has nothing to do with when the medicine is given out.

Our concern here is primarily the first bullet (see above). The thing being dispensed, given out, was the new body of truth that God began revealing once the fullness of time had come. After the Lord's death, there was no reason for God to keep a secret, as in the past. A few years after Christ had been crucified, the truth God had forever kept hidden could finally be revealed. The full truth of all God had planned was given to Paul when He received the mystery. The dispensing of this truth was/is instrumental in God's gathering all things together in Christ, both what was/is in Heaven and on earth. The gathering together of all things is an ongoing process throughout our entire Age.

While time is not involved in the meaning of the word dispensation, time does come into this discussion because time is part of the term "fullness of time." Thus, if we want to know when, or the time period in which Ephesians 1:10 takes place, then notice all the items in the bullets above. The latter three bullets refer to items taking place during the time Paul lived. Since Paul is the author of all four phrases, it is consistent to think the first reference (Eph. 1:10) also refers to items, just as the other three, which began to take place in his life. The context will be studied below, and we will see the overwhelming weight of

the evidence supports the view that Ephesians 1:10 refers to the administration of the truth that comprises the Age of Grace. The dispensation of the fullness of time is thus inextricably bound to our Age, and it is our Age that determines the time period involved. There is no intimation in Scripture that Ephesians 1:10 refers to a future age or the eternal state; the reference is to dispensing the truth of God during our Age. The reference is to dispensing the special truth contained in the mystery.

Ephesians 1:10 reads, *"that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him."* The reference to gathering all things together in Christ, both which are in heaven and on earth, is not a reference to the eternal state, in which we are united with the angels in Heaven. Instead, it is a statement of what God is doing today, now, by gathering all believers into one body and showing the heavenly hosts God's wisdom, *"to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in heavenly places"* (Eph 3:10). Today, God is dispensing the truth of the fullness of time, or, stated a bit differently, God is dispensing the full truth of the Word, *"... according to the stewardship (dispensation) from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints"* (Col. 1:25-26, parentheses added).

The dispensation of the fullness of times in the immediate context of the verses before and after, establishes the intent of the Apostle Paul. Paul is speaking of something that was occurring in his day. Similarly, the broader context of the entire book of Ephesians makes it clear Paul is talking about his day (or we could properly say, today), and how God was doing something different. The idea that Paul is referring to some future age or the eternal state, thousands of years in the future, scarcely is supported by the context of the passage; in fact, such thinking ignores the context of the Scripture. God will not be dispensing His grace or truth in the eternal state; we will all have it at that time.

In case of any doubt about Ephesians 1:10 referring to the AOG (today), notice the immediate context. Ephesians 1:9 has a direct correspondence to 1 Corinthians 2:7 (the main text of this book), which is clearly speaking of how God is working today, administering His affairs. The two verses are shown here, with key phrases underlined and numbered to show that correspondence. Thus, Ephesians 1:9 reads, *"having made known to us the 1) mystery of His will, according to 2) His good pleasure which 3) He purposed in Himself."* First Corinthians 2:7 reads (added numbers relate to the same numbers in Eph. 1:9), *"the 1) wisdom of God in a mystery, 3) the hidden wisdom which 2) God ordained before the ages for our glory." Notice the numbered relationships: 1) mystery of His will, refers to the wisdom of God in a mystery, 2) His good pleasure, refers to God ordained before the ages, and 3) He purposed in Himself, refers to the hidden wisdom.*

Also notice the very next verse, *"In Him, we have also obtained an inheritance..."* (Eph. 1:11). Verse 10 ends with "in Him, and verse 11 begins with "In Him." One thought is being expressed, and the verses are tied together by the exact same phrase that is characteristic of our Age: "in Him." The text is not looking forward to a coming age, but describing the present Age, right now, in which the believer is "in Him." The context immediately before and after Ephesians 1:10 is clearly about our Age.

The broader context of Ephesians also supports the view that the dispensation of the fullness of time refers to events taking place in our Age. A characteristic truth for the AOG is bringing those far off (Gentiles) to Christ and reconciling both Jew and Gentile into one body, which Ephesians teaches occurs in our Age, not some future age (Eph. 2:12-13, 15, 18-19, 3:6). Poor exegesis suggests the dispensation in question is thousands of years in the future from when it was written. Such an interpretation breaks



the flow of thought and injects something extraneous. Paul, in these passages, had no interest in telling the Ephesians of events in the far future, the context shows he is using Ephesians 1:10 as a clear reference to our Age, in which God is reconciling both Jew and Gentile into one body. Understanding the consistent theme and flow of thought make it clear that Paul is telling the Ephesians about things that were occurring right then.

The idea that Paul is referring to some future age is dispelled by his clear statement, "*to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known now by the church to the principalities and powers in heavenly places*" (Eph. 3:10, underlining added). It is in the Age of Grace that God's wisdom is being made known by the church to the hosts of heaven. The AOG is the time period for the gathering of all things in Christ, both in Heaven and the earth. The Scripture taken in context, before and after Ephesians 1:10, clarifies that the reference to the dispensation of the fullness of times refers to items that occur in the Age of Grace right now, not in some future age.

Ephesians 1:10 ties directly to Ephesians 1:19-21, which speaks of the greatness of God's power which He worked in Christ by raising Him from the dead and seating Him in Heaven, far above principalities and power, and every name that is named. Then comes the clincher. Paul says, "*and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His might power ... not only in this age, but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all*" (Eph. 1:19-23). The references to Christ having all things put under His feet, Christ being the head over all things to the church, His body, and the fullness of Christ are unmistakable references to the Age of Grace; indeed, these are characteristic truths of our Age. Paul is very specific and precise, the events of these verses are occurring now, in our Age; in addition, the events or truths of our Age will have an effect in ages to come. Thus, the special things of our Age will have a *carry-over* effect into the coming Kingdom Age. God started putting all these truths into effect with Paul, continuing to this very day. It is virtually impossible to suggest the text indicates that God plans to do these things during the Kingdom or in eternity. He is doing these things now as He dispenses the truth of the fullness of Christ.

God is doing all this now, so that "*in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus*" (Eph. 2:7). When Paul is referring to a future age(s), he makes it known: "ages to come." The setting of Ephesians 1:10 is our present Age, which is the showpiece that God will use to demonstrate the riches of His grace in the future. His grace in our Age, will be seen in the future by what He is presently doing in Heaven and earth, by His actions with all nations and groups of people, and by how His eternal plan has benefited us so wonderfully. We will see, in coming chapters, how our Age will show the exceeding riches of His grace in the future, which means our Age will have a profound impact during the Kingdom. That impact, whether unknown or unappreciated by us, will putatively result in many more people being saved during the Kingdom than would otherwise be the case.

In Ephesians, the administration of grace and truth are being taught, and they are witnesses of His wisdom and grace to the heavenly hosts who did not rebel with Satan. Throughout our Age, those hosts are being shown that God's wisdom has triumphed over Satan's best attempts to foil God. Satan's pride (his original sin problem) is being crushed in our Age. Satan is now being humiliated and embarrassed before the heavenly hosts, as the church reveals God's wisdom (part of the humiliation of his curse, Gen. 3:14). Satan had no inkling of any of this, which is why the mystery was not in typology or parable anywhere in the Bible, and was unsearchable (Eph. 3:8). If God's secret could be found somewhere, Satan (a very intelligent being) would have known; the angles in Heaven would have been aware, rather

than learning of it now through the church. The dispensing of the fullness of the truth of Christ is a marvelous thing, and it is going on right now.

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*The dispensation of the fullness of time relates to events in the Age of Grace; any notion it refers to a future age should suffer the fate of cerebral extinction.*

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## CHAPTER SIX

### What They Could Not Know

When I left, those tin pans had all but given up. Their spirit was nearly broken. A man without spirit is whipped. But a preacher, he could give them faith... One ounce of faith, they'll be dug in deeper than ticks on a hound.  
(from the movie *Pale Rider*)

***"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the age for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Corinthians 2:7-8)***

The mystery is the body of truth, initially revealed to the Apostle Paul, that applies particularly to one special Age, the Age of Grace (AOG). This body of truth required a new Age in which to take place; this Age was never before mentioned in Scripture until around 41 AD. While the mystery most correctly is referred to as the body of truth pertaining to one specific Age, by metonymy, the Age itself is often referred to as the mystery.<sup>57</sup> The unique characteristics of the mystery have been discussed, as has the meaning of being hidden in God.

Christ proceeded to the Cross with the mystery deeply hidden, so that God's purpose/plan from the beginning could be accomplished. That plan could only be accomplished if the mystery were revealed at the right time. It was no mystery that the overall plan made Salvation possible for humans. It was no secret the plan of God required Christ's death, and that the gospel would be proclaimed. What was top secret was the mystery hidden within the plan. If Satan and his followers had known of this body of truth, they would not have crucified Christ. Since Christ's death (blood, Cross, substitution, etc.) is the only means of truly forgiving sin, by God's own standards no sin could be forgiven if the mystery were known too soon. There would be no humans saved, in all of history, and all would go to Hell. Clearly, the crucifixion is the most important event in history, and making certain it occurred was equally important—requiring top secrecy.

The future of mankind, indeed, all of eternity, hinged upon the Cross, but premature knowledge of the mystery/secret would have disrupted everything. At this point, we know there was a secret, we know what the secret was, we know why God had to hide it from Satan, and we know what would have

<sup>57</sup> Metonymy is a figure of speech in which a thing or concept is called not by its own name but rather by the name of something associated in meaning with that thing or concept.

happened had Satan found out. What we do not know, is what was in that secret that would have changed Satan's actions. Thus, the nagging issue remains: Why would Satan not have crucified Christ had he known of the mystery? The issue at hand is to determine why knowledge of this truth would have altered Satan's desire to crucify Christ.

### **Satan's Attempts to Destroy the Seed**

As the time approached for the Crucifixion, all the major players were in agreement—do it! The unanimity between the players jumps out as very odd. In fact, it screams that something is wrong; in no way can these parties be in true agreement because the ulterior schemes by Satan and the secret not revealed by God were in direct conflict as they proceeded to the Cross. Again, not revealing something was not a deception or a lie, but a necessity to ensure the event in question did occur. In reality, there was no true agreement, even though the players were walking down the same road; Satan only agreed with God for the purpose of trying to accomplish his covert mission.

Throughout all history, Satan tried countless times to destroy Christ or His genealogical line, but always failed. He failed in the past because it was not the correct time, according to God's clock and plan. When the due time came, whatever that may entail, Christ was accepted by God as a proper sin-bearer for the world. The Father knew righteousness and justice demanded Christ's death, and the Son was willing to lay down His life as our substitute. From the heavenly perspective, this was the one and only time His death could occur. From the other perspective, Satan knew God demanded Christ's death, but he now saw a chance to kill Christ and somehow subvert God's plans as best he could. Recall, Satan tried to subvert God's plan by either destroying the Seed, the godly line leading to Christ, or getting Christ to show impurity in sold or spirit.

- Throughout the Old Testament, Satan tried to destroy the godly line any way he could (Abel, Moses, Esther's time ...). If he had succeeded in destroying the godly line, the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 would have been nullified, and the curse upon Satan would have been relieved.
- He tried many times to either kill or cause Christ to stumble (murder of young males by Herod, the attempted stoning of Jesus, the temptation ...). If Satan could not kill Him, then if he just could get Him to have a wrong attitude, a selfish motive, an impure thought, or fall for any of his clever tricks—anything—then He would not be a perfect Lamb.
- If he succeeded in destroying Christ at the wrong time, or eradicated His genealogical line at any time, or somehow caused Him to have a moral or spiritual failure, that would have been Satan's victory. He tried all these many times, but all the attempts failed. Throughout history, God always ensured that Satan would fail to destroy Christ or the line, but He also kept a secret from Satan to ensure Satan did succeed in crucifying Him, at God's chosen time.

When the timing was right, God allowed Satan to succeed in bringing about Christ's death; however, Satan fell headfirst into God's secret plan. He succeeded in killing Christ, but that death ended up being only a bruise to Christ's heel. The ultimate death blow will be to the head of Satan (yet to be realized in finality). We need to see why God's secret ultimately leads to Satan's head wound. Therefore, we will consider what happened before and after Christ's death.

## The Full Consequences of His Death

### Justification and Blood Atonements

A prime result of Christ's death is the retroactive application of the blood to forgive the sins of the past, that is, the sins of all the believers before Christ whose sins were not truly forgiven, but covered. A rough estimate of the amount of animal blood that was shed to cover (atone) for sin, from the Exodus until Christ, was in the billions of gallons (Chapter Five). That blood was not wasted, because it did provide atonement. The atonement provided a passing over or suspension of judgment for sin. Although the sins were covered, the actual forgiveness of sin is a judicial act of God, requiring Christ's death as due payment. Suspended judgment and covering of sins are an admission they still remain, although out of sight. The sins of everyone, up to the time of Christ, are represented by the scapegoat. Those sins were out of the sight of humans, removed as far as the East is from the West, but each sin was still in existence on God's books. The payment for the sins of the world had not been made, not for one sin, and the interest payment was growing.

The existence of sin that had been covered for thousands of years testified to the need for judicial action by God, declaring the sinner to be no longer exposed to the penalty of sin, but restored to His favor. Such a judicial proclamation can only be made by the Judge of the universe, and is referred to as *justification*. On the basis of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice, God declares the believer justified; the believer is not pardoned, but declared righteous and justly free from the obligation and penalty of sin. God could not justify anyone before Christ's death because there was no legal/righteous payment; all the animal blood could do was offer a temporary pardon.

Once Christ was crucified, He could *justify* all believers and declare them righteous and free. Justification means the believer is treated by God as though the person had never sinned. We are free of sin's penalty and consequences because our sins have been laid on our sin-bearer, and because of the declaration of a righteous God proclaiming us justified. Since Christ was the Son of God, His death could forgive all humans. He only needed to be a one-time sacrifice. Upon His death, the believers of the past ages finally could have their sins forgiven, and all believers after the Cross could also be forgiven.

Prior to the Cross, there was a serious problem, certainly the heavenly hosts clearly saw it. The problem was the fact that resurrected humans cannot enter the eternal state, Heaven, with their sins only covered. The act of a righteous judge had to declare their sins to be **Paid in Full**. Once a person's sin debt was paid, the person could be declared forgiven. Once a person's sin debt was paid, the person was declared forgiven, justified, saved, and reconciled to God. Once the penalty was paid, believers were finally in a position to be resurrected to enter Heaven (when that day comes).

### Number of Believers

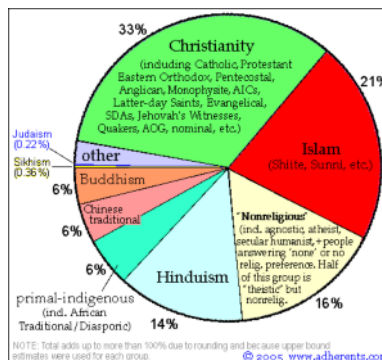
Satan's strategy heading to the Crucifixion seems related to the number of humans he could subvert in some way. God's strategy was to offer Salvation to all humans, and to declare every believer righteous, justified, and forgiven. God and Christ were headed to the Cross with redemptive plans in mind; the other players seemed in agreement on being as obstinate as possible. An eternal spiritual battle was raging, and at a level we can barely grasp. However, we will try to grasp some of that eternal battle by observing trends, over time, on how the two strategies (God saving, Satan subverting) were working.

A wise leader needs to know trends and have estimates of some sort in order to plan strategies and tactics. Oftentimes, even a poor estimate is better than nothing. To help guide our thoughts, we will look at what happened before the Cross and compare it to what happened afterwards by comparing the number of people saved before Christ's death to those saved after Christ. This appraisal may give us insight as to how, in the dispensation of the fullness of time, Christ's death changed history. As you can surmise, we are in uncharted waters as we attempt to look at factors beyond our common experiences.

Rough estimates will be made of the number of believers in the world, before and after Christ's death, in order to indicate what has occurred historically.<sup>58</sup> Making such estimates will help us understand how Satan's strategy backfired. Specifically, the goal is to see what occurred before and after the revelation of the mystery (beginning around 41AD). Understanding what happened will help us realize why the rulers of this world would not have crucified Christ had they known the mystery. Please recognize that making such estimates is needlessly complicated (in mathematics and in charts) if we use 41 AD for analysis. So, for ease of understanding and for the sake of clarity, the estimates will be made using the year zero (the birth of Christ) as a relative reference point. The conclusions are not affected by using this relative date rather than the very specific date.

As is so often the case, clarifying one issue creates two more, but such is the march of human understanding. Our goal here is to derive estimates that are considered reasonable, even if not totally accurate. In common terminology, we want estimates that are in the ball park, that is, in a reasonable range of acceptable values. The estimated values are meant to provide perspective and general trends; however, the actual numbers, known only by God, could be significantly larger or small. The estimated values will provide insight, even if not as accurate as desired. We will be considering the number of people saved throughout history, a rather difficult task, to see if the Age of Grace brought about a great change in the relative number of people saved, before and after Christ. Exact numbers are not the issue; the issue is deriving acceptable values to guide our thinking.

For a starting point, the number of people in the world who profess to be of a certain religion, or to be non-religious, are shown in Figure 6.1. Christianity and Judaism are somewhat different from other religions because these two religions have been persecuted throughout history. Thus, the number of people who will admit to being in these two groups is most likely lower than is the actual case; for example, a person may be reluctant to confess being a Christian in China or in a Muslim country.



**Figure 6.1.** The Percentage of People Worldwide Based Upon Their Religious Affiliation.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Rough estimates imply estimates that are better than educated guesses or crude declarations without reliable analysis. The estimated numbers used here have value and are derived from reasonable data and analysis; but they are not absolute facts. The estimates derived do allow for reasonable observations, as long as they are not extrapolated beyond the intended limits.

<sup>59</sup> www.adherents.com

The data in Figure 6.1 may be easier to understand in a simple list (see below). The question that arises is how many in each group are true believers in that religion and how many are nominal followers? For our purposes, we only have to consider that question in relation to Christianity.

World Religions (2005)

1. Christianity, **33%**
2. Islam (Shiite, Sunni, ...), **21%**
3. Nonreligious (agnostic, atheists, ...), **16%**
4. Hinduism, **14%**
5. Buddhism, **6%**
6. Judaism, **0.2%**
7. All others, **10%**

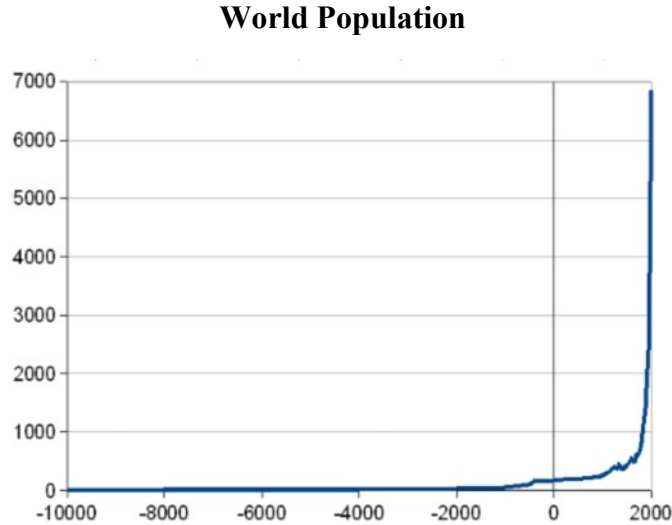
Figure 6.1 and the listing above indicate that one-third of the world's population professes to be Christian, making Christianity the largest religious group. This is encouraging, but of the one-third professing to be Christians, many only have an affiliation or association with Christianity. The percentage of those truly saved is less, and it is the truly saved who are of interest here. Thankfully, God knows who among that group is truly saved; but if we want that information, estimates have to be made. If any person believes he or she is a sinner and that Christ died in his or her place to pay for that sin, then that person is truly saved, regardless of church affiliation. Making an estimate with such a crude assumption should cause the reader discomfort; however, when all is said and done, the reader will see the trends in history, and may see this issue in a new light.

We can only estimate how many of the one-third of the world's population has true, saving faith. The author asked a number of respected believers what they considered to be a reasonable value for the percentage of truly saved among those proclaiming to be of the Christian religion. The responses generally varied between 10% to 30%, with wide extremes. The estimates of believers no doubt were influenced by the biblical record of Israel's history, the testimony of Jesus Christ, and the evidence in the Epistles, which indicate the way leading to Salvation is narrow and difficult, while the way to destruction is broad and easy (Matt. 7:13-14). For our purposes, we will use an average value of 20% as the number of those who are truly saved among those professing to have a Christian affiliation.

We have now derived a means to roughly estimate the number of believers in the world: Method 1. This rough estimate may not be the best, but it provides a reality check for later estimates. If 20% of those who profess to be of the Christian religion are truly saved, then the number of true believers in the world today amounts to 6.6% of the world's population ( $0.20 \times 0.33 = 0.066$  or 6.6%). The world population in 2025 will be around eight billion, and 6.6% of that number would be *528 million people who are truly saved*. Wow, who knew? Even if a person does not agree with the estimated values, there can be no doubt the number of those saved is very large. The reliability of this method to estimate the number of people who are truly saved is limited by our assumptions. At the same time, this method has some credibility based upon the use of respected data, Figure 6.1. The 6.6% value may be slightly low because Christians cannot always freely express their faith or religious affiliations. To conclude, Method 1 estimates the number of truly saved at any one time to be around 6.6% of the world's population.

We will now proceed to develop an alternative to the method above, called Method 2. The two methods are independent of each other, so if they derive reasonably close values, that increases our confidence in the estimates. Method 2 will provide a more detailed estimate of those saved before and after Christ. To determine this figure, we need data on historic world populations; such data are a science in their own

right, not to be unappreciated.<sup>60</sup> The data on the world's population throughout human history are shown below in graphic form, Figure 6.2. What immediately jumps out is the fact the world's population grew slowly from creation until around the time of Christ (Figure 6.2 does not show the Noachian flood, but the final results are not impacted). Then, just before the time of Christ, the world population began to rise noticeably, until around the eighteenth century when it began to explode.



**Figure 6.2.** World Population as a Function of Time. (data from U.S. Census Bureau's International Data Base). Population is shown in millions; thus, 1,000 million is really one billion. Dates are shown before and after Christ's birth (year zero).

The data from Figure 6.2 are shown in Table 6.1 for a better portrayal of actual numbers. The bold numbers near the end of Table 6.1, show the projected population figures for future dates. The dramatic growth in population just before Christ is obvious; especially noticeable is the growth in the 1700-1800 AD timeframe. In Table 6.1, unequal time increments were used; large time increments were used for those years when there was a slow increase in population. Small time increments were used when the population was changing rapidly. Thus, the later years have small time increments to consider properly the rapid, dramatic increase in world population. Unequal time increments were properly accounted in the calculations.

<sup>60</sup> Data from U.S. Census Bureau's International Data Base.



Year	World Population
10,000 BC	4-10 million
8000 BC	5-10 million
5000 BC	5-20 million
4000 BC	7 million
3000 BC	14 million
2000 BC	27 million
1,000 BC	50 million
500 BC	100 million
0 (Christ)	150-300 million
500 AD	200 million
1000 AD	250-350 million
1500 AD	500 million
1700 AD	600 million
1800 AD	1,100 million
1900 AD	1,600 million
1950 AD	2,500 million
1975 AD	4,000 million
2000 AD	6,000 million
<b>2025 AD</b>	<b>8,000 million</b>
<b>2050 AD</b>	<b>9,000 million</b>

**Table 6.1.** Estimated world population (in millions) throughout human history.

As we will discuss below, an incredible growth in Christianity has taken place over time, and that growth is especially true in the Age of Grace. The estimates and numbers that follow reveal information concerning the numbers of people saved before and during the Age of Grace. That information helps us see the incredible impact of the Age of Grace, especially compared to what happened in the Old Testament (before the AOG).

The discussion so far has been straight forward and non-technical. The purpose of this book is to be comprehensible by the general public. To maintain that purpose, the technical discussion dealing with numbers, assumptions, reasons behind assumptions, and other details, have been put in the Addendum to this chapter. Thus, those who like to dig into the data and calculations may do so, but the general reader does not have to wade through pages of technical discussions of no interest to him or her. The conclusions and findings of the Addendum will be shown in the main text (here), without the supporting documentation and calculations.

## Impact of the Mystery

### Unbelievable growth in Christianity

The origin and development of the values used are explained in the *Addendum to Chapter 6*. The numbers derived below are to be understood as rough estimates. They will be used to make broad-scale comparisons and to understand the relative magnitude of the values under consideration.

In order to show the growth in the number of believers in the Age of Grace, it is necessary to establish a base line, that is, the number of believers who existed before our Age. Establishing that figure is complicated by the fact we do not know how long humans existed before Christ. We will use 6000 BC as a convenient starting point. From 6000 BC to zero AD, the total number of true believers in the world (the total number accumulated over the 6000 years of history), was estimated to be *87 million (87 M)*. This is the number of people who had their sins covered by animal blood. These are the people who had to have their sins retroactively forgiven, that is, in Christ's time the blood of the Lamb had to go back in time to remove completely these covered sins. A number like 87 million is not to be regarded as an absolute number, but a rough estimate. Humans were most likely here before 6,000 BC, but populations would have been decreasingly smaller farther back in time, so this rough estimate merely provides a general idea of the numbers under consideration. A safe statement to make is this: the total number of people saved in all biblical history before Christ was most likely in the millions.

In Table 6.1, the Age of Grace lies in the time periods from zero AD to 2025 AD.<sup>61</sup> The total number of believers, during the entire two thousand years of our Age, was estimated to be *1,950 million (1.95 billion)*. Note that in the six thousand years before Christ, the number of believers was in the millions. In the two thousand years of our Age, one third the time span, the number is in the billions. Something drastic had to have happened to cause the incredible increase in the number saved. Over 22 times as many people have been saved in the AOG in one-third the time.<sup>62</sup>

To help gain a clearer perspective, we will consider what will happen a century from now. Extending the AOG one century into the future, the time period from zero AD to 2125 AD, the total number of believers is estimated to be *three billion, fifty-five million (3.55 billion)*. The next century alone will add almost another *1.6 billion (1,600,000,000)* new believers! The total number of believers in the AOG will potentially be 3.55 billion by 2125.

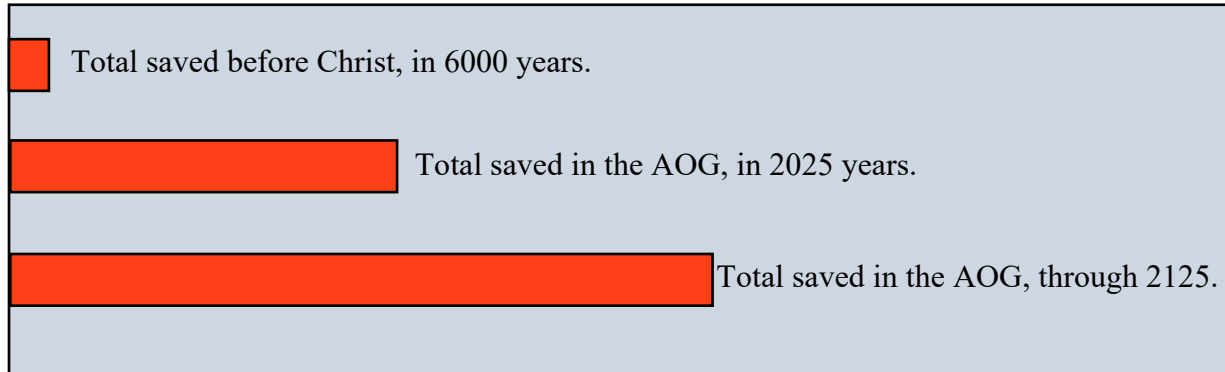
- Total of all who were saved before Christ: **87 million**
- Total of all who are saved in the AOG, through the year 2025: **1,950 million**
- Total of all who will be saved in the AOG, through the year 2125: **3,550 million**

**Figure 6.3.** The estimated total number of believers before Christ and in the Age of Grace. Note the potential number saved in the next century alone.

<sup>61</sup> The AOG actually began in the mid-first century, but the year zero AD was used for convenience and clarity. The final figures and conclusions are unaffected by this small allowance.

<sup>62</sup> Even if the estimate, see Addendum, of the percentage saved in the world (around 7-8%) is wrong, certainly the number saved is within a factor of five of that shown; thus, the range within which the correct value lies has to be one fifth to five times 1.95 billion. Considering the huge range based upon a factor of five, the results are essentially that same, that is, a dramatic increase in the number of people saved has occurred in the AOG.

The following visual portrayal, Figure 6.4, helps us grasp the numbers shown above. One does not have to remember the estimated numbers, and can even treat them with some skepticism, but the general idea is what is important to grasp. Sometimes a visual effect reinforces the verbal message, and together they have a more lasting impression on our minds than just facts and figures.



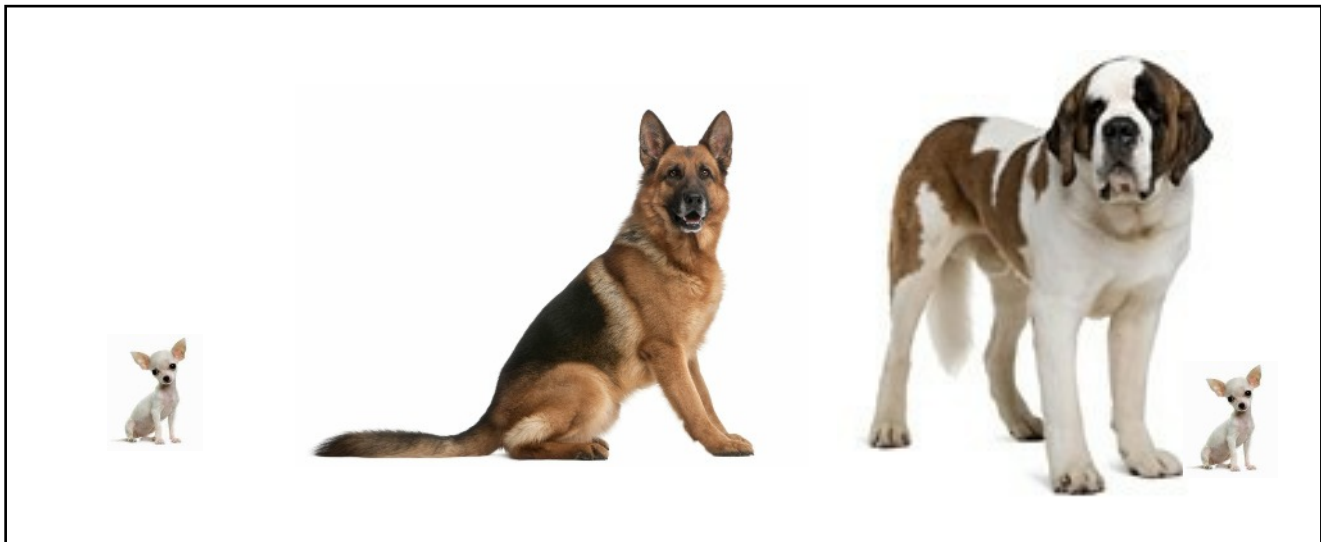
**Figure 6.4.** A visual portrayal of the estimated numbers shown in figure 6.3.

The average reader may have found the discussion to be understandable up to this point. The estimated values will continue to be discussed, in the process more and more numbers will be presented; this may seem confusing. No person is expected to remember the numbers, but to remember what the numbers teach. So, numbers, figures, and graphs will be shown to present the estimates in various ways, hoping one or more of the ways will register with the reader. The total number of people saved, before and during the AOG, have been presented. Next, the number saved each year under the Law, and each year in the AOG will be presented. Then, the relative number saved in the AOG compared to the Law will be shown. All the numbers are meant to teach one thing: *the Age of Grace experienced a huge increase in the number saved; thus, God's mystery had a profound impact on humanity.*

As astounding as the totals saved (above) may be, we still do not have a true perspective because the time periods involved are not of the same length. With different lengths of time, the comparisons are not on an equal basis. To derive a better understanding, a constant length of time is needed, and, the value of one year is ideal for this purpose. Thus, we will compare the average number of people saved each year before Christ, and the average number saved each year in the Age of Grace. If we put the findings above on a yearly basis, a much more accurate perspective is attained, and the numbers become even more incredible.

- Average number saved each year before Christ: **14,500**
- Average number saved each year in the Age of Grace, 0 AD to 2025: **962,963**
- Average number saved each year in the Age of Grace, 0 AD to 2125: **1,670,588**

**Figure 6.5.** A more accurate portrayal of the impact of the Age of Grace can be seen when the estimates are presented on a yearly basis.



Saved per year under Law

Saved per year in AOG

Saved per year soon in AOG

**Figure 6.6.** A portrayal of the average number of people saved each year before Christ (under the Law) and in the AOG, based upon Figure 6.5.

The small Chihuahua represents the number of people saved each year under the Law, compared to the German Shepherd that represents the number being saved each year, at the present time. The Saint Bernard represents the number potentially saved each year in the next century, with the Chihuahua shown for comparison.

The number of people being saved in the AOG (German Shepherd) is near **one million a year**, while in the Old Testament the number was only around **fifteen thousand** (Chihuahua). If the next century is factored into the numbers, assuming the Lord does not return, the numbers will grow in an ever-increasing rate, resulting in over **1.6 million people worldwide being saved each year** (St. Bernard). Using the estimates to indicate general trends, or in visual ways to make a point, are better than suggesting they represent exact numbers. We have no clue how long this increase in the number of those saved can continue; however, in spite of wars, natural disasters, famine, disease..., the trend has continued for our entire Age. Of course, the rapid growth in Christianity is tied to the rapid growth in world population. The "experts" of a couple centuries back would have considered such population figures to be absurd, yet the facts prove otherwise.

The number being saved today is a testament to the veracity of Scripture, that is, His longsuffering brings Salvation: *"and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you"* (2 Pt. 3:15, also see Rom. 2:4). While many Christians hope and pray for the Lord to return soon, that may be very selfish. Perhaps our prayers should be directed along the lines of thanking God for His longsuffering and wisdom whereby so many people are being saved.

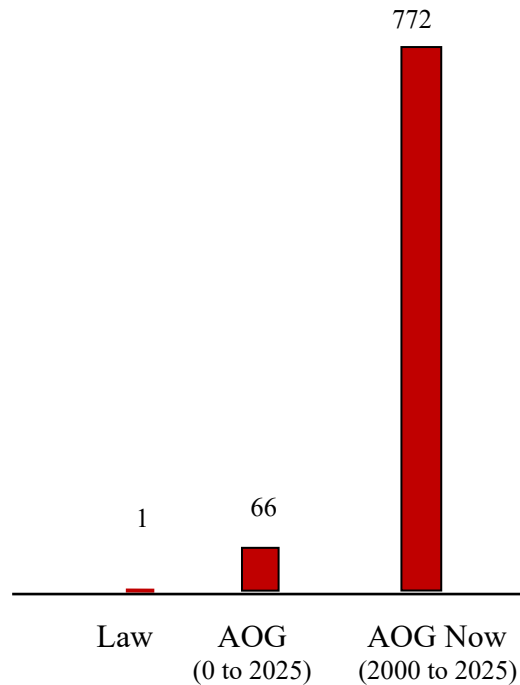
The estimates above can be viewed in yet another way to help drive home the significance of what we are learning. If we consider the number of those saved each year before Christ in relation to the number saved in the Age of Grace, we get another view of what is happening. The relationship between the AOG and the Old Testament can be seen by looking at the ratios of the number saved before and after

Christ. By considering ratios, some of the estimates and assumptions that were used will tend to cancel out, giving a picture less subject to human errors. Accordingly, for each person saved before Christ, we find an average of 66 who have been saved in the AOG. Going one century more into the future (to 2125 AD), and average of 115 people will be saved in the AOG for each person saved before Christ.

The amounts above (66 and 115) are the averages during the entire Age, the average of over 2,000 years. These two figures are relatively low because the world's population was low in the early centuries. What is occurring today, from 2000-2025 AD, is what we need to know to get the best view of the impact of the AOG on Christianity. Today, some **772 people are being saved** compared to each person saved prior to Christ. For each person saved under the Law, 66 were saved over the course of our Age. Presently, 772 people are being saved for each person saved under the Law. A graphic to demonstrate this huge difference is hard to find, so try to grasp this ratio: **1:66:772**. The box below and Figure 6.7 show this ratio.

**Comparative Number of People Saved per Year**

- Average number saved during the AOG (0 to 2025 AD), compared to each person saved before Christ: **66**
- Number **presently being saved** (2000 to 2025 AD), compared to each person saved before Christ: **772**



**Figure 6.7.** Comparing the numbers saved in the AOG with the Old Testament Law.

## Conclusions

Previously in this chapter, it was stated that one nagging issue remains, that is, why would Satan not have crucified Christ had he known of the mystery? The impacts of the mystery are becoming clearer. Satan did not know of our Age, nor was there any way for him to somehow discover it. We now have a clue as to why Satan proceeded with Christ's death even though he knew God planned that death. Had he known how our Age would impact world history, how the number saved would skyrocket, or how the future would be influenced by our Age, he would not have cooperated in Christ's death. The incredible wisdom of God is now being made known to the heavenly hosts through the Church: *"to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Eph. 3:10-11). Consider these facts related to how the AOG changed the course of history.

1. For each person saved in the Old Testament, **772 people are being saved today** (2000-2025 AD) (see Addendum to this chapter). This statistic is astounding, something God had to ensure Satan did not know ahead of time.
2. All those saved during the entire AOG, through the year 2025, add up to **1,950 million** (~2.0 billion), compared to only 87 million in all the time before Christ, which was three times as long.
3. All those potentially saved during the entire AOG, through 2125, will be **3,550 million** (3.55 billion). Nearly twice as many people may be saved in the next century as during the entire AOG so far.
4. The AOG added more time to human history than previously known. That extra time has resulted in an incredible increase in the number of people saved.
5. The death of Christ will result in Satan's ultimate head wound. The effects of His death are increasingly being realized at this time. Satan is feeling the results of God's superior wisdom today by the number being saved in our Age, more than anything he could have imagined. Satan is excluded from redemption, so he is on a one-way road to destruction. When he is thrown into the Lake of Fire, that will be the final head-blow resulting from Christ's death—the crushing reality of Christ the Victor. The squeeze on Satan is occurring now; the crush is coming.

The incredible number of people saved in the AOG is just the start of what the Lord has accomplished in our Age and what He will do in the ages to come. At this point, the effects of God's new Age are beginning to be seen, but there are many unanswered questions that will be addressed as we proceed. The Age of Grace has irrefutably altered human history, and there is much more to come.

## Addendum to Chapter 6

This Addendum to Chapter 6 is for those who want to dig into the origin and derivation of the numbers presented in Chapter 6. The general reader may want to skip this Addendum and go directly to Chapter 7.

In the section entitled, *Number of Believers*, one method was used to estimate the number of truly saved people in the world. That method, Method 1, estimated the number of believers in the world to be approximately 6.6% of the world's population. The 6.6% figure may be slightly low. In this Addendum, the alternative methodology, Method 2, indicates approximately 7-8% of the world's population is truly saved. The two methods are in substantial agreement. Thus, we have two independent methods, indicating similar percentages of the world's population who are true believers. This close agreement helps assure the analysis used here is reasonable and the results are within the ball park, that is, the results fall within a reasonable range of values.<sup>63</sup>

### Estimated Number of People Saved in the World in All Ages

Method 2 will be used in Table 6.2 to estimate the number of people saved in the world throughout history. Table 6.2 requires some explanation, so it can be better understood. The *Time Period* column refers to an arbitrary period of time, as shown; the period is based upon our needs. The first 6,000 years are grouped into one time period, which includes all the ages/dispensations prior to the AOG. During those 6,000 years, the world's population (excluding the Flood) grew rather uniformly, so an average population is easy to estimate. The time periods used in Table 6.2 get progressively shorter as time advances in order to properly account for the tremendous changes in population during the latter centuries.

The *Average World Population* column shows values derived from Table 6.1. Next, in order to determine the number of people saved in any time period, it was necessary to estimate the number of people who lived during each time period. The number of people who lived in a period is related to the average life expectancy for that period. The average life expectancy is influenced by normal life spans, child deaths, disease, and so on. The average life expectancy is called a generation; a generation here refers to the average length of life (not the 20-30 years between grandparents and parents, or between parents and children). Deriving the average life expectancy for all ages throughout human history is a science in itself; good data are not readily available. At times in history, life expectancy was less than 35 years, and at other times higher. The Psalmist refers to a life of 70 years, but that is the average life of those who survived childhood, premature death, and so on, not the life expectancy we are discussing (Psa. 90:10). A life expectancy of 50 years was used in Table 6.2, meaning, each 50 years was considered a generation. A constant value of 50 years was used throughout Table 6.2. Arguments can be made for a value(s) smaller or larger in different periods. Today's life expectancy is reported to be well over 50 years, but abortions, birth control, spontaneous miscarriages, child deaths ... complicate what is reported. In the end, the conclusions will be essentially the same, whether or not adjustments are made to the length of a generation. The number of 50-year generations during a time period is derived by dividing the years in

<sup>63</sup> A ballpark figure is an acceptable, rough approximation based upon the fact an exact number is not known; therefore, a rough estimate will suffice. This term alludes to a baseball field, which is always an enclosed space with boundaries. An estimate within the ballpark means it is within bounds or a reasonable range, while an out-of-the-ballpark estimate would be beyond a reasonable range. Rough estimates (in the ballpark) are reasonable, but they are not to be taken as exact figures. Ballpark estimates pass the gut test, which draws upon a person's unconscious/conscious learned experience to indicate if something is reasonable. The gut holds insights that are not immediately available to our conscious mind at times, but it can tell a person if something is within reason, that is, within the ballpark, or way outside what is reasonable.

the Time Period column by 50. For example, 6,000 years divided by 50 means there were 120 generations in that period.

The *Total Lives* column refers to the total number of people who lived in a time period. The Average World Population times the 50-Year Generations in that period yields the total lives. For example, the first line shows an average population of 50 million, which multiplied by 120 generations, yields a total number of lives of 6,000 M (6 billion). The 6,000 M is further divided into two groups: 1) those of the godly line (those people we read about in the early Old Testament) and those we read about later in the Old Testament from the chosen nation of Israel, and 2) the rest of the world. During the first 6,000 years of history, and during the time when Israel was in existence, Israel was about one-tenth of the world's population, based upon biblical data and world population projections.

The *Percent Saved* column refers to the percent of truly saved individuals in each time period. In Noah's day, the number dropped to eight believers for a short time. According to the Bible, the number saved in Israel varied widely. In Elijah's time (906 BC), there were only 7,000 men saved, so their families would make the number of believers in Israel approximately 40-50,000 (1 Kg. 19:18). Israel's population at that time was about five million, which means less than 1% was saved. However, in times of national revival, a much higher percentage was saved. The number saved in Old Testament times is indeed a challenge to determine; an estimated value of 10% was used for Israel and 0.5% for the rest of the unbelieving nations.

The *Percent Saved* column values were derived independently of Method 1. Method 1 indicated there were about 6.6% true believers in the world today; interestingly, Method 2 calculations derived numbers very close to Method 1. From year zero-1500 AD, the estimated number of Christian nations was 20%, with 15% truly saved within each Christian nation; thus, the truly saved in the Christian nations were 3% of the total lives of that period ( $20\% \times 15\% = 3\%$ ). For the same period, the 80% non-Christian nations also would have had Christians (underground or not state recognized) who were assumed to be 5% of the total lives of that period ( $80\% \times 5\% = 4\%$ ). Thus, for the period from zero to 1500 AD, the total number of truly saved would have been 7% ( $3\% + 4\%$ ) of the total lives in that period. For the period from 1500-2025 AD, the estimated number of Christian nations increased to 30%, with 15% truly saved within each Christian nation. In addition, the 70% non-Christian nations were assumed to have 5% believers, yielding an estimated 8% of the total lives being believers for that period. The *Total People Saved* column refers to the total saved in a specific time period, found by multiplying the % Saved by the *Total Lives*.



Time Period	Avg. World Population	50-year Generations	Total Lives (pop. x gen.)	% Saved	Total People Saved
6000 BC-Zero	50M	120	600M in Israel	10	60M
			+5400M rest of world	0.5	27M
<b>Total saved before Christ = 87M</b>					
Zero-1000 AD	250	20	5,000	7	350
1000-1500	400	10	4,000	7	280
1500-1900	900	8	7,000	8	560
1900-1950	2,000	1	2,000	8	160
1950-2000	4,000	1	4,000	8	320
2000-2025	7,000	0.5	3,500	8	280
<b>Total saved from Christ to 2025AD ~ 1950M</b>					
2025-2125	10,000	2	20,000	8	1,600
<b>Total saved from Christ to 2125AD ~ 3550M</b>					

**Table 6.2.** Total number of people saved in various time periods.

### Comparing the Number Saved Before and During the AOG

There are many ways to discuss the estimates above. One way is to consider the number of people saved each year before Christ and compare that to the number saved each year in the Age of Grace.

- Saved each year before Christ: = **14,500** (87,000,000 saved/6000 years)
- Saved each year after Christ, zero AD to 2025: = **962,963** (1,950,000,000 saved/2025 years)
- Saved each year after Christ, zero AD to 2125: = **1,670,588** (3,550,000,000 saved/2125 years)
- Saved each year now, from 2000 to 2025: = **11,200,000** (280,000,000 saved/25 years)

Another way to analyze the data is to consider the average number people saved per year before Christ, compared to the average number saved per year in the AOG. Such a comparison is very instructive because many of the assumptions and estimates used to derive the raw data are cancelled out. For example, if we used too high a percentage for those saved before Christ, and similarly for after Christ, then this comparison tends to cancel out the wrong assumptions. Continuing, the average number of people saved per year before Christ was 14,500. The average saved per year in the AOG, up to 2025, is 962,963. The actual numbers have to be used cautiously; however, if we divide those saved in the AOG by those saved pre-Christ we get 66. That means for each person saved before Christ, there have been 66 saved in the Age of Grace. Now we can begin to grasp what has happened in our Age. We can also see some of our assumptions cancel-out, meaning the assumptions, either too high or low, do not unduly impact the final results.

Going into the future, we can project that by 2125 the ratio will be 115. Thus, as the Age continues, the rate of those saved continues to rise rapidly, increasing from 66 to 115 in just one century. More and more people are being saved at an increasing rate, mostly due to the rapid growth in world population.

The ratio of those saved before and in the AOG has been discussed, but those numbers reflect the averages over the entire 2,000 years of the Age of Grace. We will now consider what is happening today, not in the entire Age. From 2000 to 2025 AD, which we will call "today," the number saved has exploded. For each person saved before Christ, there are currently **772 people being saved today**. This is a concept each believer should grasp, for the number of people being saved today is a dramatic change from historical figures. The exact numbers are not important, and should be used very cautiously, but what is important is the tremendous growth in those saved.

Based upon averages over long time periods, the ratio of those saved before Christ compared to those saved in the AOG, up to 2025, is: **1:66**, (962,963 saved each year in the AOG, divided by 14,500, the number saved each year before Christ = 66).

The ratio of those saved before Christ compared to those saved in the AOG, up to 2125, is **1:115**, (1,670,588/14500 = 115).

The ratio of those saved before Christ compared to those **saved today** in the AOG, from 2000 to 2025, is: **1:772**, (11,200,000/14500 = 772).

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### **Why They Would Not Have Crucified Christ**

Satan was a blunderer ... who made a stupendous failure. If he had succeeded, we should all have been worshipping him, and his portrait would have been more flattering. (*George Eliot, Romola*)

This chapter will continue the discussion begun in Chapter 6, pertaining to possible reasons why Satan, had he known of the mystery, would not have crucified Christ. *Recall the mystery is the body of truth underlying and creating the Age of Grace.* Reasons will be presented for why the world population grew so rapidly and why the Age of Grace was itself instrumental in that growth. In addition, matters will be discussed related to how the AOG influenced world events, how it impacted Salvation, and how it revealed the full accomplishments of Christ's death. Key truths of the mystery will be considered, since those truths help us see why knowledge of them would have caused Satan to change his mind concerning Christ.

#### **How the Age of Grace Changed the World**

##### **World Population Growth**

If the number of people saved per year were graphed over the course of human history, the resulting graph would look much like Figure 6.2. The number of saved would be low at first, grow slowly, then shoot exponentially upward in recent centuries. The number of people saved is primarily a function of world population; thus, the more the population rises, the more people are saved. A graph of those saved would be slightly more pronounced than Figure 6.2, that is, it would show a more rapid rise during the latter part of our Age because more nations and individuals in those nations identified with Christianity. While the number of saved individuals is related to the world's population, the growth in the number saved is a feat within itself. When the world's populations grew rapidly, there had to be a corresponding effort to evangelize all the new people in the world. Thus, a vast Christian outreach was, and is, required just to keep pace with world population growth. This outreach is where missions, families, churches, personal witnessing, Bible studies, media outreach, and so on, come into play. If there were not an ever-increasing Christian outreach, the percentage of those saved would begin to lag behind population growth. However, we see the number of saved individuals not only keeping pace with the rapid

population growth rate, but even surpassing it. This expanding outreach is certainly attributable to Christians around the world, but they are not the only factors involved in the growth of Christianity.

As a note of clarification and to prevent confusion, the terms Christianity and Age of Grace need to be briefly explained. In common usage, the term Christianity is defined as the religion (broad use of the word) that is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ. According to this definition, Christianity began when Jesus Christ began His ministry (~30 AD). The teachings of Christ were believed before the Age of Grace began several years later, approximately 41 AD. Believers were first called Christians in the Bible around 42 AD, when the AOG was in its early stages (Acts 11:26). Thus, Christianity, as defined in common usage, and the Age of Grace do not begin at the same time in history. This discrepancy can be confusing, and while the differences between when Christianity began and when our Age began are important for theological reasons, the differences are not critical in the discussions to follow. In fact, in order to make reasonable approximations and for gaining insight into the overall perspective, in Chapter 6 we considered the Age of Grace and Christianity to begin at year zero. Neither began then. However, for our considerations, encompassing all of human history, there is little difference if we start the AOG or Christianity at year zero or 41 AD. Starting at zero makes the matter much easier to understand and for graphics to make sense.

As we consider the thousands of years of human history (see Figure 6.2 and Table 6.3), the eighteenth century experienced a very pronounced increase in world population. This increase is of interest for this discussion because we need to know if God caused the rapid increase in the world's population through His providence, or if He merely foresaw that increase and took advantage of it. Put another way, was the rapid rise in world population a result of the Age of Grace, or was the rise independent of our Age? Compelling arguments can be made for both sides; of course, theologians tend to argue the former and secularists the latter.

For millennia, the world's population grew only slowly. Then, a small but noticeable increase in growth occurred around 500 BC. However, to be candid, nothing really dramatic happened in the first centuries when the AOG began. A secularist could say the lack of a dramatic increase in the first centuries after Christ is evidence that Christianity (or AOG) had no role in world population growth. Nevertheless, a steady increase began after Christ, slowly at first, but that increase seems to have been God's hand preparing world events for the future. Then, in the 18th century, the world's population took a turn upward and has never stopped. Christians generally would agree that God not only foresaw all this but guided world events so this explosion in population would occur. Accordingly, God was the guiding Force ensuring the world's population grew rapidly, and one reason He wanted such growth is because it provided for a tremendous increase in the number of saved individuals.

God's decision to introduce the Age of Grace in the first century was planned so that world events, secular and sacred, could be set in order for what lay ahead. Our Age's introduction was at just the right time to prepare the way for success. While we may wonder why God introduced the AOG exactly when He did, that introduction corresponded with many other world events He was guiding to ensure the perfectly correct timing for Christ's birth and death, which had to occur at the right time. Coordinating sacred events with countless secular events was necessary so they all came together at just the perfect time, culminating in Christ's death. Perfect timing of events was also necessary so that shortly after His death the AOG could be introduced. There were many events, more than we will ever know, that determined the correct timing for the AOG to begin in its due time. For the Age of Grace, that time was in the mid first century.

The increase in the world's population was ensured by God through means ordained by Him. One line of evidence suggests that God indirectly caused the population to increase by enabling humans to make life-changing discoveries. Those life-changing discoveries were the result of the Age of Grace, for our Age extended the time allowed humans until the final days, and it created an environment conducive to learning, discovery, cultural advances, medical and scientific breakthroughs.... Thus, what seems as secular advances may be best termed providential action, that is, Divine guidance and preparation.

Extra time on God's clock was needed because, according to Scripture, there would have been only a short time from the time of Christ until the last days; indeed, those days were upon them in Acts 2 (33 AD). If there were no AOG, there would not have been the time needed for the tremendous increase in population or advancements in human culture. Any thoughts of normal human history continuing for millennia after Christ (as has occurred the last 2,000 years), apart from the introduction of our Age, is *not given as a possible option* in the Bible. Normal human history could not have continued long after 33 AD without our secret Age being inserted into the course of that history. The AOG created the needed time and environment for discoveries and advances to occur. Thus, our Age provided the stage so discoveries and advances could occur, by providing the needed time, by fostering a climate for change and discovery, and by ensuring the means of disseminating the gospel.

The Age of Grace was instrumental in the burgeoning world population; if for no other reason than human history would have come to an end if there were no AOG. By introducing this new Age, more than a proportional number of people were saved, and the "no distinctions" between races, national origin, gender, and classes meant these groups began to interact more, and worked together for the common good. Thus, our Age had a much broader impact upon the world than we often realize. Not only were matters of faith and Salvation impacted, but what appear as secular advances were, at least partially, the outcomes of the AOG.

As a result of our Age's influence upon society, there were corresponding influences on health, longevity, agriculture, science, literature.... The accelerated learning, cultural advances, and discoveries were documented for others to learn. As a result, secular truth spread and reached around the world, even if initially rejected. "The cannon, electric lighting, printing, small firearms, and innumerable other innovations: each was at first neglected or opposed in some parts of Europe for idiosyncratic reasons, but once adopted in one area, it eventually spread to the rest of Europe."<sup>57</sup> Similarly, when one group of people learned that personal hygiene was beneficial for disease prevention, that information eventually passed on to other groups, augmented by our Age breaking down walls and barriers that previously existed.

As our Age advanced, humans became aware of many things that improved their lives. The most important development in increasing the world's population was the increase in life expectancy. Clean water, better hygiene, and proper sewerage disposal have been the most influential in expanding life expectancy; but, the understanding of these matters came only in the last couple centuries. While some of these life-changing practices were taught in the Bible, they were not universally understood and had to be rediscovered. Sanitation, hygiene, and clean water were the primary factors leading to the reduction in disease and pandemics; thereby, increasing world population. There are many other factors involved in the increase in population; certainly, advances in agriculture increased food supplies and nutrition, which greatly impacted longevity. Advances in health principles and medicine played a role. The age of enlightenment and the understanding of the laws of nature played a huge role in making beneficial

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<sup>57</sup> Diamond, Jared; *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*; W. W. Norton & Company; 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10110; 1999.

discoveries. The end of the Little Ice Age, approximately 1400–1800 AD, may have been instrumental in allowing populations to explode due to a much friendlier environment. Many of these factors, even those seemingly of secular origin or beyond human control, coalesced around the 18th century. If fact, many of these factors got their spark and grew into a blaze by the 18th century, due to the truth and godly providence inherent in the Age of Grace.

*The Encyclopedia of Death and Dying*,<sup>58</sup> states the following:

Population growth did not become exponential until around 1750. Before that, high mortality counterbalanced the high fertility needed by agrarian parents. Death rates were high and life expectancy was low; life expectancy at birth was in the range of twenty to forty years (most likely around thirty years) until the middle of the eighteenth century. This high mortality was a function of several factors, including poor nutrition, which led directly to deaths through starvation and indirectly through increasing susceptibility to disease; epidemics; and, quite possibly, infanticide and geronticide, especially during times of food shortage.

Starting in the middle of the eighteenth century, the mortality rate began to decline in the West, the first place in the world where the natural balance between births and deaths was altered by humans. This decline in deaths occurred not because of major medical breakthroughs (e.g., penicillin was first used only in the 1940s) but rather because of improvements in food availability, housing, water cleanliness, personal hygiene, and public sanitation. Later, in the twentieth century, medical advances ... accelerated mortality decline.

The AOG impacted humanity far beyond life-changing discoveries that increased the world's population. There were many other events, promulgated by our Age, which increased not only the world's population, but missionary efforts around the world. Reliable means of transportation enhanced exploration, increased trade between nations, and promoted the discovery of new lands. Trade and discovery of new lands brought associated resources, which led to an increase in population and prosperity. New lands brought opportunities, certainly some tragedies, but, in general, human advancement. Missionary efforts were enhanced by the Renaissance, the Reformation, the printing press, and more reliable means of travel. When plagues and disease were somewhat under control (thanks to the new understandings of disease control), widespread missionary efforts became a more attainable goal, not well realized before. The printing press allowed copies of the Word to be made, often in the local language. God did not invent the printing press, but He guided world events and human minds to make it possible. As our Age continued, technologic advances presented even more ways to reach the lost. Thus, Christian outreach has been enhanced by the development of the printed Word, radio, television, movies, cassettes, computers, satellites, Internet, videos.... The Age of Grace not only directly resulted in billions being saved, but it most certainly guided what has happened in the secular world—providence in action.

At this point we can say the following: the AOG changed history by increasing the world's population and the numbers saved, primarily Gentiles, at a rate previously unheard. Satan had no clue this was in God's plan. Satan's strategy to proceed with the crucifixion backfired because:

- a. his plan did not bring shame to Christ, but glory;

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.deathreference.com/>

- b. Satan was humiliated before the heavenly host, of which there are many (Rev. 5:11);
- c. the atoned sins of the past were totally forgiven;
- d. Gentiles were saved in spite of Israel's fall; and
- e. the AOG fostered an environment conducive to the growth of Christianity, perhaps having an impact extending into the millennial Kingdom (more on this later).

## Expansion of Time

The insertion of a long-lasting new Age into the time allotted for human existence ensured the benefits of Christ's death could be realized. Without the expansion of time, that is, more time added to God's clock of the ages, the benefits of His death could not have been incorporated into our spiritual lives long enough for us to really understand them. Not only would we not have understood them, but without more time, additional generations would not have benefited from the full accomplishments of His death. In addition, taking the good news of the mystery to the world required a lot of extra time. Plain and simple, it takes time for profound new truth to be understood by humans and to be absorbed into their spiritual teachings. The new Age not only provided that time, but was characterized by the Gospel going to the Gentiles, even though Israel had fallen. The added time has turned out to be two millennia, so far; and during this gracious addition of time, billions of people have come to faith in Christ. Satan was oblivious to this expansion in time, Salvation and blessing going to the Gentiles even though Israel failed to accept the Messiah, and many more items to be discussed. God knew the events of His secret Age would change the course of history; those events were not fortunate occurrences, but the direct result of the manifestation of His wisdom.

Satan did not know or foresee the expansion of time created by the introduction of a new Age. Since the Age itself was unknown, the events in that Age were not foreseen by anyone; the term "hidden in God" takes on special meaning and helps us see why the events of our Age were hidden. Thus, Satan did not know of the enhanced Christian outreach during our Age, the accompanying population explosion, or the unheard spiritual blessing given to the participants of our Age. We now have the advantage of hindsight to better understand what has happened as a result of the mystery. However, most of Christendom does not accept the profundity of this teaching, so exploring such matters is not part of their theology. For those who accept the mystery, we know that God had a secret, what the secret was, and that it was intentionally hidden by God for one purpose: so that Christ would be crucified. We are beginning to see why Satan would not have crucified the Lord Jesus had he known all this ahead of time.

Salvation has come to the Gentiles in the Age of Grace, without Israel's first being converted. In fact, Salvation has come because of Israel's lack of conversion. Jews and Gentiles are on equal footing today, which means He treats everyone with favor and kindness, with no distinctions. There is no preferred nation (as Israel had been), group, gender, or race of people. God made one new spiritual body out of all believers, called the Body of Christ, or the invisible church. Christ is the head of this spiritual body; the believers are the various body parts. We are joined to Christ, meaning we are united and made one with Him. Because believers are made one with Christ, we are completely identified with Him. All He is and has done become ours by faith: His attributes and accomplishments are transferred, imputed, to us. Thus, in God's view, we are holy, justified, forgiven, raised, and seated in Heaven. These are spiritual truths Satan never knew; God made sure of that. The AOG reveals that the Body of Christ is a blessed body of believers, and Christ is now glorified. These truths are in complete contrast to the humiliated Jesus with

a little flock of believers that Satan had in mind. Satan had no inkling of what God secretly planned, and knowledge thereof would no doubt have changed his mind concerning the crucifixion.

### The Carry-Over Effect

The Addendum to Chapter 5 noted that the truths and events of our Age will have an impact on the future, referred to as a *carry-over* effect. The exceeding greatness of His power and the riches of His inheritance in the Age of Grace will impact the future, "... *not only in this age, but also in that which is to come*" (Eph. 1:21b). This carry-over effect may more appropriately be called the carry-forward effect, since our Age will impact the next age. In the preceding verse, the age to come is not so much a reference to a specific time-period, as a reference to the future state of things, "that which is to come."<sup>59</sup>

Ephesians 2:7 says, "*that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His Kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*" The ages to come include the present and future, in which the riches of His grace are displayed. From the context of this passage, we understand that the special truths of our Age will display God's grace and wisdom, not only in our Age, but in the future. Thus, what God is doing today will influence the Kingdom Age quite significantly, or it would not be mentioned in Scripture. Some of the carry-over effects will be discussed briefly, and to do this we must first discuss the future age, the Kingdom.

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*The Age of Grace will have an impact on the future earthly Kingdom.*

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The topic of the earthly Kingdom is a bit confusing, but we must have a basic understanding in order to grasp the carry-over effect.<sup>60</sup> Scripture presents a great deal of information concerning the Kingdom, but we humans find it hard to put it all together in a coherent form. Thus, we do not know, with a reasonable degree of certainty, all we should or may like to know. We know the Kingdom occurs after the Second Coming of Christ, but exactly who gets into the Kingdom, and what occurs in the Kingdom are not well defined. The next several paragraphs will attempt to provide critical information about the Kingdom; hopefully, this information will be more helpful than confusing. Additional thoughts on the Kingdom can be found in the Appendix to this chapter. Do not be concerned if the next several paragraphs are perplexing. What you need to know, the bottom line, is basically the text below.

*There will be a future Kingdom on this earth in which Christ will reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, for one-thousand years. In that Kingdom, there will be many saved and unsaved people. Israel will be converted prior to the start of the Kingdom, and become the means by which God reaches out to the world to bring the good news of Jesus Christ.*

<sup>59</sup> Wuest, Kenneth S.; *Wuest's Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI 49502; 1980 Reprint.

<sup>60</sup> The term Kingdom, as used here, can be referred to in various terms: earthly Kingdom, Millennial Kingdom, Kingdom of Heaven, future Kingdom, etc. All these terms refer to the same 1,000-year Kingdom of Heaven on earth. It is called the Kingdom of Heaven because Heaven comes down to earth. This Kingdom is the hope of the Old Testament saints and *those not living in the AOG*. Those living in the Age of Grace have the hope of Heaven. The Kingdom of God is a different term; it refers to the *entire scope* of God's interests; it includes the Kingdom of Heaven, the Age of Grace, angels, and so on. The Gospels generally refer to the Kingdom of Heaven.



The Kingdom will be composed of at least three groups of people. One group who will get to go into the Kingdom will be the saved individuals from all previous ages who have died; those in the present Age of Grace are not in this group. Those saved in the AOG will be taken out of this world by the Rapture; they will be in Heaven during the Kingdom. Those in the Kingdom from past ages will be people like Abraham, Moses, Ruth, Esther, David, Isaiah, and the twelve Apostles. This first group comprises the 87 million people noted in Chapter 6. In order for these past believers to enter the Kingdom, there has to be a resurrection of the dead, and that occurs at the first resurrection. The first resurrection is the first time believers, en mass, will be resurrected from the dead. This occurs at the Second Coming of Christ and just prior to the start of the Kingdom. The believers who are raised from the dead, in the first resurrection (Rev. 20:6), will receive new glorified bodies and apparently will no longer sin.

The second group that will enter the Kingdom will also be believers; but these people will be those saved in the future, during the Tribulation and Day of the Lord, and that are alive when Christ returns. The number saved during the Tribulation and DOL will be large; we know all Israel will be saved at that time (Rom. 11:26-27). Some of these believers will be alive at the Second Coming of Christ, and some will have died as martyrs. The believers who have died will be raised from the dead and given new, glorified bodies, they are part of the first group.<sup>61</sup> The second group is composed of believers living at that time who will go directly into the Kingdom, seemingly with mortal bodies. When those with mortal bodies eventually die, they will receive new, glorified bodies, most likely at the Great White Throne at the end of the Kingdom (Rev. 20:11-15). It seems any time a person receives a new, glorified body, he or she also becomes sinless.

The first two groups contained the saved; the third group contains the unsaved. The unsaved people who enter the Kingdom will be those alive at the Second Coming of Christ; they will go into the Kingdom with normal, mortal bodies. They will still sin (Rev. 22:15). In addition, there will be many unsaved people born during the Kingdom, from those with mortal bodies. Who are these unsaved people who are allowed to go into the Kingdom, and why? Matthew 25:32-34 provides the answer, at least somewhat. When Christ comes, He will gather all the nations of the world (or individuals in the nations) and divide them into sheep and goats. These people are alive at the time. The unsaved dead are not raised until after the Kingdom (Rev. 20:4-15). Some of the live people will get to go into the Kingdom; these people are called sheep. Other live people will not be allowed into the Kingdom; these people are called goats. Exactly who the sheep are is not clear, but we do know they will have treated Israel favorably during the Tribulation and Day of the Lord. Perhaps it is because they are saved that they will be supportive of Israel. However, unsaved people can be kind and considerate, too, so many may be unsaved. Bottom line, we do not know if the sheep are all saved, or not.<sup>62</sup> What we do know is that there will be many unsaved in the Kingdom, and many unsaved will be born during this time. We also know Israel has a specific ministry to the unsaved in the Kingdom. The number of unsaved may be small at first, but the number will increase rapidly during the ideal conditions of the Kingdom.

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<sup>61</sup> The new, glorified bodies of the resurrected saints (regardless of the group they are in) will be reunited with their respective souls and spirits. Presently, these souls and spirits are with the Lord.

<sup>62</sup> The reference to sheep and goats, in Matthew 25:32-41, may be referring to nations or to the individuals within the nations; the latter seems more probable. The sheep are alive at this time, whether nations or individuals are in view. The sheep (people) will enter the Kingdom with mortal bodies. The Bible mentions the fact there will be unsaved in the Kingdom (Rev. 21:27, 22:15). The rapid increase in world population will mean many will have to be taught about Christ.

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*The significant theological difference between the AOG and the Kingdom is that the first is Grace-based, while the latter is Law-based. One is based upon the mystery, the other on what had been promised all through the Bible.*

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God has redemptive plans for the unsaved during the future Kingdom. In the early part of the Kingdom, there will be far fewer people than in the world today. The Jewish people and perhaps all the saved people entering the Kingdom will, " *'...be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation'* " (Ex. 19:6, Rev. 5:10). Priesthood is not a vacant term implying they have nothing to do but sit around eating grapes and petting lions. Biblical priests taught, ministered, judged, modeled the truth, hallowed the Lord, and were great discerners (Ezek. 44:23-24). This nation of priests has a specific job and mission field: the world of the unsaved in the Kingdom, the third group.

A common misunderstanding is that there will be nothing but love, joy, and peace during the Kingdom. This is not correct. What occurs during the Kingdom is beyond the scope of this book; however, death, pain, and sin appear to occur among those who enter the Kingdom with mortal bodies (Isa. 65:20).<sup>63</sup> Those who enter the Kingdom with glorified bodies will no longer have sorrow, pain, or sin. Israel, and likely all believers, will have the priestly job of ministering to the unsaved people, who may constitute a small group at first. Remember, though, how rapidly the population rose in the AOG since 1750. That same scenario will likely play out again, since the conditions will be perfect for a population explosion. Since Satan will be bound, the conditions will favor conversion in ways we cannot comprehend. Thus, after a century or two, exploding population growth may result in billions of unsaved who need to be taught about Christ, which will continue for many centuries. The final number who may be saved during the Kingdom could be more than anyone has considered. Incidentally, during the Kingdom is when verses like Jeremiah 33:22 will be fulfilled, that is, when Israel will also experience a dramatic increase in population, " *'As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.'* "

The Bible primarily addresses the sacred realm of the Kingdom and discusses the secular realm less. In the Kingdom, the Bible indicates that the former things and ways, before the Kingdom, will not be remembered or come to mind (Isa. 65:17). Correctly understanding what is meant by not remembering former things is one of those concepts that may require us to challenge former beliefs. Clearly, the believers will not have forgotten Christ, what He did on the Cross, the heroes/heroines of the faith, or everything in the past. More appropriately, the things that are not remembered and that do not come to mind are the former earthly values and ways, which will be replaced by heavenly values and ways. *There will be no longing or wishing for the former*, because God's provisions, in the present, will be so far much greater. The believers will not have any desire for the things of the former world.

We do not know what the unsaved will recall, but most likely they will remember and be told about the Age of Grace. This remembrance of our Age is an indication of the potential for carry-over effects of our Age into the Kingdom. Possibly, the Lord Himself will teach them of the good things from our Age, even though they had previously rejected them. The recollection of our Age would have a carry-over impact on them. As the Kingdom matures, those who can actually remember the AOG will have died, but God indicates His actions in our Age will still impact the future. Clearly, the truths of our Age, the wisdom of God, the greatness of His power toward us who believe, and all that Christ did will come to mind for both

<sup>63</sup> See [www.grace4you.com](http://www.grace4you.com), Adult Studies 25-27, *Judgement Day*, for further explanation.

believers and unbelievers. Two examples will be given below to help us better understand this issue. Each example shows a truth that is specific to our Age and how that truth may have a carry-over effect in the next age.

**One Body.** An example of the carry-over effect is the *one-body* principle, which is a principle truth in the Body of Christ today. In the future, after the AOG, will be the Tribulation, the Day of the Lord (culminating in His Second Coming), and then the Kingdom, Figure 4.2. These events have considerable documentation in the Scripture. The Tribulation and Day of the Lord deal with wrath and subduing God's enemies; they are on legal ground and relatively short in duration. The one-body principle would not likely have a significant effect upon them. However, the Kingdom is a different story. During the Kingdom, Satan is bound and cannot deceive the nations until the thousand-year Kingdom is over (Rev. 20:2-3).<sup>64</sup>

The Kingdom will be significantly different than today, since evil will have far less influence upon the world. Accordingly, the prospects for people coming to saving faith will be greatly enhanced. All believers today are united into one body, producing a spiritual effect that has worked marvelously in our Age; if that principle carries over into the Kingdom, there could be a dramatic impact.

If the one-body principle were carried over into the future, even to a small degree, the result could harm Satan's cause. Even though he will not be in the Kingdom, his cause to create subversion may continue, which seems reasonable in light of the fact that he and his cause are revived for a short time after the Kingdom (Rev. 20:7). We know Israel (perhaps all believers) will be the priests to the unsaved, and that the nations (or individuals in the nations) will come to Israel for spiritual light. While there will be some distinctions during the Kingdom, the distinctions between Jew and Gentile do not appear to be based upon factors that imply one is superior to the other. Distinctions among believers also occur in our Age, but we are still one spiritual body and everyone is equal in God's sight. The body is united by one factor—faith. In the Kingdom, the only factor that seems to be important in uniting people is the same as in our Age: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The spiritual equality and unity of believers in our Age may well be the model that is employed in the future. Thus, the principle of believers being united in one body will most likely carry over from our Age because God uses one age to build upon another. The net result of the carry-over effect is that people will be inclined to trust and work with the Jews, or anyone bearing God's Word, creating a climate ripe for conversion.

As previously mentioned, the first resurrection occurs at the end of the Day of the Lord, when Christ returns in His Second Coming. The purpose of the first resurrection is to determine who will get to go into the long-promised, earthly Kingdom. We have discussed the three groups that will get into the Kingdom. Some of the truths and blessings of our present Age may influence the unsaved in the Kingdom. The unsaved who are allowed into the Kingdom will certainly see and remember what had just happened when Christ came, what happened to Israel when that nation believed, the destruction of Babylon, how God destroyed the armies of the world set against Him, and so forth. All these things happen right after our Age and will be fresh in their minds; accordingly, the unsaved people in the Kingdom will be keenly aware of God's presence, and a whole new world. They will know this is their last chance. The incredible events they will have just witnessed no doubt will wake them up to the need for faith in Christ and help them recall past events of spiritual significance, including the Age of Grace. The Holy Spirit may help them remember important spiritual lessons they forgot or ignored. In the Kingdom, recollection and teaching about past events, including the Age of Grace, will help prepare

<sup>64</sup> Whether Satan's demonic forces are bound is not known. Since he is bound, it would seem that his hordes would also be bound. If his evil workers are allowed to be active, the implication is they would be far less influential.

them for accepting the Gospel. If our Age promotes acceptance of Christ during the Kingdom, we can see why Satan would not have crucified Him, had he known.

The breaking down of the wall between Jews and Gentiles on matters of faith has carried over into the secular realm in our Age. Today, Jews and Gentiles are working together and making great advances in the secular world, and those advances have a positive impact upon Christianity and promote the dissemination of the Word. The principle of cooperation and working jointly in the secular realm may still pertain in the Kingdom. Many of the saved and unsaved who get into the Kingdom may recall how much was accomplished in the secular world during the AOG through joint efforts. Since so much was accomplished in our Age, the potential has to be incredible for what may be accomplished by working together in both the secular and spiritual realms during the Kingdom.

Had Satan known of the one body and all the implications of it, certainly he would have reconsidered the crucifixion. Even the angels in heaven are learning today of God's wisdom through the Body of Christ (Church). The lessons the heavenly hosts are learning may have an impact, unknown to us, even after our Age ends.

**Spiritual Blessings.** God is working in unique ways in the AOG, providing spiritual blessings not seen or heard in the past. For example, each believer has the indwelling Holy Spirit guiding him or her, which is a means of operation previously unknown, except for certain people and for a temporary purpose. The Scripture indicates the promise of the Spirit permanently indwelling humans as something that the prophets said would occur in the future as a result of Israel's conversion. However, with Israel's downfall and the Kingdom being held in abeyance, God gave that blessing to the Body of Christ before Israel's conversion. Receiving the Holy Spirit before Israel's conversion means we acquired the Spirit earlier than expected. This is part of the mystery.

In addition to the indwelling Spirit, the believer today is given many other spiritual blessings, previously unheard and unknown. Because of the mystery, Satan was kept in the dark about what God would be doing or how He would be blessing us today. The logical inference for not letting Satan know of these spiritual blessings was that they were something that would have altered Satan's plans to crucify Christ. The Bible gives at least twenty such spiritual blessings in Ephesians 1 and 2, most of which are peculiar to our Age and were received earlier than expected. Certainly, the Rapture and Judgment Seat of Christ are events of Divine operation never envisioned by any human. The spiritual blessings and truths given to the Body of Christ were not seen, heard, or known before; these are the basics of what Paul is referring when he says, "*But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit*" (1 Cor. 2:10). If God did not reveal them before Paul's day, there had to be a reason.

When we look at the testimony of Scripture, our spiritual blessings provide a high potential for a carry-over effect. Throughout the Bible each new age/dispensation progressively built upon previous ages. The precedence has been set and is there for us to learn, that is, the Lord builds upon the foundation of the past, making advances in each new age that allow humans to experience the continued unfolding of His will. Such advancement is quite clear in the Bible; thus, we are guided by the past to believe the Age of Grace will be similar in that it will have a major influence upon the future. And rightfully so, because, after all, the Age of Grace is the hallmark of how God deals graciously with mankind. The AOG is when the fullness of time is proclaimed, that is, the full accomplishments of Christ's death. The full accomplishments of Christ are eternal and, of necessity, will be a blessing carried forward. Based upon the consistent advancement of truth and blessings, we can expect the

present secret Age will be used to great advantage in the future, and that it will have a significant impact during the Kingdom.

## Specific Truths

Beyond the explosion in world population, the expansion of time, and the carry-over effect, many other present-day realities were kept from Satan because of how they would impact believers, the world, and the future. Since they were kept secret, they have been in operation only in our Age; thus, these realities are peculiar to our Age, or we could say age-specific. Knowledge of these realities would certainly have alerted Satan to a coming change that would adversely affect him; indeed, they alter the future of Heaven and Hell. We will look at four of these realities to see how they have impacted the present Age, and how they will affect the future.

**Rapture.** The fact not everyone will have to die was one of the Bible's mysteries (see Chapter 3, section entitled, *What Is a Biblical Mystery*). The fact that some believers would not have to die, but would be taken out of this world by the Lord, is one of the special truths of our Age (1 Cor. 15:51). The Rapture was a constituent part of the mystery, so all things pertaining to the Rapture were unknown until they were revealed to Paul. The Rapture describes how a person can go to Heaven without dying. While all believers may not have to die, they must all be changed, that is, they must receive glorified, incorruptible bodies in order to get to Heaven. *"And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord"* (1 Thes. 4:16b-17). There is no way a mortal, physical body can go to Heaven; each person has to receive a new, glorified body. You can immediately see Heaven is not like the earthly Kingdom, in which some will enter with mortal bodies. At the Rapture, the dead believers, those described as being in Christ, will be raised from the grave first; then the believers who are alive will be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air. All believers, whether dead or alive, will be given glorified, incorruptible bodies and reunited with their respective souls and spirits. This is the believers' blessed hope.

The words "caught up" are *raptō* in Greek, from which we get the words raptor and Rapture (1 Thes. 4:17). A raptor is a bird of prey, which swoops down and captures prey in its talons. Similarly, the picture portrayed in the Bible of the Rapture is of the Lord swooping down to catch us up, away from harm. The Rapture is not something fearful, but a blessed hope. There will be no pain (talons) or fear, for the Word continues, *"Therefore comfort one another with these words"* (1 Thes. 4:18). The thought being conveyed is of a merciful God swooping down, just in the nick of time, to gather believers in His arms in order to protect them. The Rapture will take all the believers who ever lived in the AOG to Heaven. No one knows how many believers *will be alive* when this event takes place. This secret catching-up of believers is *only* for our Age. We have estimated the total number of believers for the entire AOG, from 0 AD to 2025 AD, will be in the ballpark of 1.95 billion. By 2125 AD, the number increases to around 3.55 billion.

The Rapture may upset Satan because he had no way of knowing that believers, alive at the time, would be taken out of the world before the Tribulation. From all that had been written, he thought all live believers had to *go through* the Tribulation. Satan's plan was to cause pain and anguish during the Tribulation; the secret revealed this group of believers would be beyond his touch. The Tribulation will be his special time (especially the last half) to torment believers, but for those saved in our Age, that cannot happen. Not only can he not torment them, but the Salvation of believers in our Age is sealed, meaning each believer's Salvation is made eternally secure by God so that it cannot be lost. He did not

know about those who would be saved during our Age, that their Salvation would be sealed, or of their special deliverance from the wrath to come (1 Thes. 1:10, 5:9). All of these present-day realities must be a thorn in his side.

**Judgment Seat of Christ.** The Judgment Seat of Christ is often called a special judgment for believers of our Age, occurring right after the Rapture. Actually, it is not a judgment in the normal use of the word, but a seat, or place, where the believer is rewarded for the things he or she may have done in this life. The normal Greek word for judgment is not used; instead, the Bible uses *Bema* of Christ, to show a distinction (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; Eph. 6:8; 1 Thes. 4:14-18). In Paul's day, the Bema was a raised platform reached by a step(s). The Bema was used as an official seat of judgment, a place for oratory, or, most importantly in our case, a place to reward the winner of an athletic event. Paul seems to be referring to a raised seat/place, not for judgment but for reward. The best understanding results when we replace what is called the Judgment Seat of Christ by the biblically correct phrase, the *Bema of Christ*. The Bema of Christ is not to determine if a person will go to Heaven or Hell because that has already been established by the fact only the saved individuals of our Age are taken there.

The purpose of the Bema of Christ is to give the believers eternal reward and praise. Contrary to what is often taught, the purpose is not to expose the secret and bad things we have done in our lives, but to reveal the hidden things of our lives that are worthy of reward and that no one knew existed (1 Cor. 4:5). In Second Corinthians 5:10, the word *bad* seems to refer to things of no eternal value (like mowing the lawn or making a meal), not things that are sinful. The things of no value do not garner a reward because they are of no heavenly value; however, our motives and attitudes while doing them may earn us reward. The whole purpose of the Bema of Christ is to examine all we have done, to determine what is of lasting value in the Kingdom of God (Heaven).

In essence, at the Bema, Christ will examine our lives to determine what God was able to do in our lives by transforming us and working through us. The term, Bema of Christ, is specific to our Age. The purpose of the Bema is for the believers to receive praise from God. The sins we have committed, in open or in secret, are not an issue at the Bema of Christ because they have been forgiven and taken away. Believers are justified (declared righteous and free from the penalty of sin) the moment we trust in Jesus Christ, because the Son completely paid for our sins. He paid for them and there are no lingering debts or consequences, otherwise His work would not be "the finished work of Christ." The plain teaching of Scripture is that the penalty for sin will never fall upon the believer, for the simple reason that penalty has completely fallen upon the believer's substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The believer will never be brought into judgment; Christ has already paid the price for our justification. We should accept the fact that Christ paid for our sins, and we do not have to pay, somehow, a penalty or debt in the future. The whole purpose of the death of Christ was to deliver us from future judgment and give us freedom in this life. Perhaps this secret rewards seat will be of great irritation to Satan because humans will be rewarded and praised by God, and he knew nothing about it. Had he known, would that have changed history?

**Restraining Influence.** Every believer today is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, as noted above. While the Spirit has a direct influence upon us personally, the same Spirit also has a major influence upon earthy affairs as He works through the Body of Christ, that is, all of us as one body of believers. On the personal level, the Spirit works within the believer, transforming the mind (Rom. 12:1-2), and this transformation defies Satan's schemes by making the believer more like Christ. Satan knew nothing of transformed minds, or renewed minds, as occur in our Age. The work of the Spirit in our lives is in direct contrast to

Satan's goal, which is to subvert people's faith and get people to have minds conformed to this world and its ruler.

The Spirit's influence upon the entire world is through the corporate action of the Body of Christ, the Church. This influence is referred to as the *restraining influence* upon lawlessness and anarchy. The Apostle Paul says, "*And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way*" (2 Thes. 2:6-7, underlining added). Paul is saying there is something ("what" in verse 6) that is restraining the lawless one (antichrist), and this will be especially true as time approaches the Rapture. The restraining influence has to be taken out of the way, so that the lawless one can be revealed during the Tribulation. The restraining influence is due to someone, called "He" in verse 7. The *what* and *he* are referring to the same general thing, a restraining influence caused by a restrainer. Unfortunately, the *New King James Version* capitalizes the "he," which indicates reference to the Holy Spirit. Because of this, it is easy to get confused between the Holy Spirit and the Body of Christ. It is not the Holy Spirit that will be removed from the earth so that the antichrist can be revealed in the Tribulation; it is the Body of Christ that will be removed. The view that the Holy Spirit is taken is incorrect.

The Greek word for "what," in verse six, is neuter; the "He," in verse seven, is masculine; both refer to the same thing. The Body of Christ can be either neuter or masculine in the Greek, depending on usage. The Body of Christ also has the corresponding masculine or neuter articles. This means the Body of Christ can be both the "what" of verse six, and the "He" of verse seven. A similar argument for the Holy Spirit can be made in these verses based upon the Greek. However, the deciding factor is that Jesus Christ taught the Spirit had to stay, meaning it is the Body of Christ that is removed at the Rapture, not the Spirit.

Before His ascension and resulting absence from the earth, Jesus clearly taught the Holy Spirit would be sent to the earth to be the believer's comforter and helper. Not only would the Spirit be here, but He would remain here, "*...He (God) will give you another Helper (Holy Spirit), that He (Holy Spirit) may abide with you forever*" (Jn.14:16b, parentheses added). Jesus purposely reassured the disciples they would always have the Comforter-Helper, and this promise was especially important in view of the coming Tribulation. If ever a Helper were needed, it would be then. To teach the Holy Spirit will leave just when He is needed most is contrary to Scripture. The Spirit will not leave the earth at the Rapture; He will stay here specifically to help the newly converted believers during the Tribulation and Day of the Lord, just as Jesus taught.

The Body of Christ, the spiritual body of believers, is the restraining influence upon the world, through the Spirit working within us. We are the ones that must be taken out of the way in order for the end times to proceed. Again, the true restraining power comes from He Who is within us; but when the Body of Christ leaves, the Holy Spirit stays. The Spirit working through the Body of Christ is what hinders evil, and helps keep order in the world today. The restraining influence makes a world suitable for believers and unbelievers to make discoveries and advances in society. The restraining, or hindering, aspect is good for society because it ensures some measure of law and order and keeps religious debauchery in check. The hindering aspect also establishes an environment that allows for secular advances. Satan did not know of these effects upon society and religion, as a result of the restraining influence. The restraining influence establishes a world that is open for the teaching of the gospel, and the means to do it; certainly, that was something Satan had not envisioned.

**Redemption.** Christianity has grown as a result of the increase in the world's population, as mentioned in Chapter 6. However, the world's population growth most likely did not occur independently of the AOG, meaning, if there were no AOG, the world's population may not have increased as it did (see Figure

6.1). If the world's population did increase independently of our Age, it would be a lucky coincidence. Most likely, population growth is an outcome of the AOG, and the number saved in the AOG has been impacted by the increasing population. We can observe the fact that population growth and the number saved do coincide; not only that, but they seem to symbiotically work together. God's plan appears to be designed so that the AOG and population growth would be partners, with one benefiting from the other, enabling each of them to be more than if they were to occur alone. For example, in the 18th century when the world population began to explode, a primary factor may well have been our Age creating a climate for discovery and advancement. The symbiotic relationship between population growth and our Age may set a pattern in the Kingdom, a pattern in which Jews and Gentiles will work together, resulting in more persons saved than would otherwise be the case.

The AOG capitalized on the oldest and best missions system in the world: the individual and the family. These two are very instrumental in the percentage of believers keeping pace, or surpassing, the increase in population. In fact, these two have been the primary means of bringing people to God/Christ through all the ages. Families in the AOG were able to increase in size, and the children were able to live longer; therefore, parents could teach more children about Christ, and then they would teach their children, and so on. The AOG helped individuals and families prosper, and they benefited from the spiritual and secular events of our Age—all leading to more believers. Satan did not know about more believers resulting from increases in family size and longevity; had he known, his plans may have been altered.



## **Appendix to Chapter 7**

### **Additional Information Concerning the Kingdom**

The number of people who will be saved in the future has been broached and will be considered in detail later. Any discussion of the number that may be saved in the future requires more information about the Kingdom. The need for understanding the Kingdom is helpful for understanding Scripture, and to better understand the upcoming chapters. Various Christian theologies differ widely on what the Bible means by the word Kingdom, the biblical Kingdom of Heaven. This book supports the view of a literal Kingdom of 1,000 years, during which Christ reigns on this earth, which is what Jesus taught while on Earth, what the Old Testament prophets foretold, and what is described in Revelation. When Israel did not accept the Messiah, God was compelled to set Israel aside, and the associated Kingdom; however, that setting aside was only temporary. During the time Israel is set aside, the AOG is in operation. God set the Kingdom aside and introduced a whole new thing, the AOG. However, the crucial point must be made that God did not abandon His promise of an earthly Kingdom, He merely put it on hold until His purpose for our Age is completed.

Perhaps this matter can be best understood by way of analogy. Suppose you made a phone call to a friend, and you were having a conversation that was going poorly. Then, very unexpectedly, your friend said he or she needed to put you on hold to answer another call. After putting you on hold, your friend talked to someone else for quite some time then came back on line and continued talking to you, at which time the conversation was very good. In the analogy, your call was similar to the coming Kingdom. Kingdom plans were not going well, and eventually the Kingdom had to be put on hold. Your conversation with your friend represents the Kingdom; the conversation between your friend and the other person represents the Age of Grace. The other person's call interrupted your call. When the conversation between your friend and the other person ended, you were taken off hold and continued your conversation. So, too, the Age of Grace interrupted the Kingdom plans; but when the AOG is over (the Rapture), the Kingdom program will continue. In your case, one conversation was interrupted by the other, but your conversation was not replaced by the other; you will still get to talk. Your conversation (Kingdom) was not disconnected, but was delayed (by the AOG) so that the other conversation could take place. For a time, the Kingdom plans were put on hold, but that was only temporary; just as you and your friend were reconnected, so will God and the Kingdom be reconnected. This time, the talk will be sweet.

Replacement Theology teaches the promises for the Kingdom have been given to the Body of Christ, which would be similar to saying the words you intended to speak to your friend became the conversation between your friend and the other person. No, your friend and the other person had their own private conversation; the two conversations are independent of each other. Replacement Theology and the amillennial view contend the Kingdom program has been abandoned forever, which would be similar to saying your phone call was disconnected. There is a big difference between being disconnected and being put on hold. Replacement Theology and the amillennial view were beliefs that were created to explain Scripture because the mystery was not understood. Replacement theology contends the AOG was "substituted" for the Kingdom because God had no more use for Israel and her Kingdom program. Today we have the advantage of seeing the Kingdom with new eyes, which indicates the Kingdom will be revived in the future and every promise kept exactly as given.

We can also look at this issue from the marriage-divorce perspective.<sup>65</sup> The nation of Israel was God's chosen people, and He entered into a covenant with them, often referred to as a marriage covenant. However, Israel did not remember her first love; instead, she played the part of a harlot (spiritual adultery), by worshipping other gods. Countless episodes in Israel's history demonstrate God's seeking her repentance or being punishment for her unfaithfulness. Israel, to some degree, would repent but then repeat the same unfaithful deeds. Eventually, Israel's unfaithfulness made a mockery of true love and devotion.

Israel's history was characterized by her sin, repentance, and forgiveness by God, a pattern that she engaged in, over and over, for countless cycles. Israel continued on the wrong path, and after Solomon's death, the twelve tribes of Israel split into two groups: the northern ten tribes (which retained the name of Israel) and the southern two tribes (called Judah). In time it became obvious that God had to take drastic action; Israel's spiritual adultery could not go on forever. God was compelled to take action; otherwise, He would have been seen as unfaithful to His own Word and slack concerning sin. However, if divorce or remarriage were to be pursued, they would have to be done in the manner prescribed in Deuteronomy 24. Thus, the northern tribes were divorced by God according to Scripture, *"Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also"* (Jer. 3:8; also see Hos. 2:2; Isa. 50:1, 54:4). The drastic action was for the purpose of waking up Israel and Judah. Thus, God divorced the northern ten tribes of Israel around 722 BC, and in accordance with Deuteronomy 24, she was sent out of the house, which in this case meant being sent into Assyrian captivity. She has never repented and is still divorced. The same thing happened with the southern two tribes of Judah later in time (Ezek. 16:22, 43; Jer. 2:2). At this time, all twelve tribes are divorced from God; the wake-up call for Israel will occur in the Tribulation.

Israel was set aside, divorced. Once the divorce took place, according to Scripture, God was free to marry another. Today He is joined to another, the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is the wife of Christ today (Eph. 5:30-32). This Body is a new wife, a wife never known about prior to the Apostle Paul's time. The former wife is living, but living in adultery, and God is married to another wife. When we are taken to Heaven (Rapture), then God will have no earthly wife and be free to remarry. However, He cannot remarry a former adulterous wife, according to Scripture. This brings us to the most miraculous event ever: *God will transform the former adulterous wife (Israel) into a pure virgin*. This transformation is the purpose of the Tribulation. Now we can see the entire picture: God did not abandon the former wife (Israel and her kingdom) forever, but temporarily set her aside. During the Age of Grace, He is joined to the Body of Christ. Once the Body is in Heaven, God will have no earthly wife. He will then transform the former wife and restore her as His pure bride. All the blessings He promised of an earthly Kingdom will take effect. The Body of Christ in the Age of Grace is a whole new entity with respect to what had been prophesied. The old wife and the prophesies connected to her were not destroyed; they will be revived. Israel will be restored and brought into a relationship of true, pure love. All the Kingdom promises to her will be kept, precisely as given.

God will demonstrate His faithfulness to His Word when he restores Israel. Something thought impossible for thousands of years will become a reality. The AOG is what is occurring while the earthly Kingdom is held in abeyance. Some aspects of the Kingdom and the Age of Grace are the same; however, because some aspects are the same does not allow for the claim that the AOG replaced the Kingdom. For example, the spiritual blessings promised to Israel have been given to us, but all the other

<sup>65</sup> Shober, Steve; *The Song of Solomon, A Love Story with a Hidden Message*; www.grace4you.com and Grace Publications, Inc.; Waunakee, WI and Grand Rapids, MI respectively; 2014.

Kingdom promises are not part of the AOG, including geographic and land matters, New Jerusalem, total peace, Christ ruling on earth, political changes, resurrection of the dead saints, what God is accomplishing on the earth....

The AOG is not a substitute or replacement for the earthly Kingdom. The AOG was always in God's plan, and we know why it was hidden and could not be revealed. The AOG did not evolve out of the Kingdom program; it was a whole new program that came on the scene very rapidly. The earthly Kingdom had a spiritual component that required faith in Christ; that faith was the stumbling stone for Israel. When Israel fell due to unbelief, the Kingdom was temporarily set aside. Thus, the Body of Christ is not the Kingdom group of believers. We can say, therefore, that one replaced the other in time, in the sense the AOG came after the announcement of the Kingdom. However, the AOG did not replace the Kingdom in God's plan.

The significant theological difference between the AOG and the Kingdom is that the first *is Grace-based*, while the latter *is Law-based*. One is based upon the *mystery*, the other on what had been *promised* all through the Bible. Equating the two, even in part, results in trying to mix Law and Grace, which does not work and is taught against in Scripture (Rom. 11:6). Trying to mix Law and Grace is like trying to mix water and oil by putting the two in a bottle and shaking it. For a short time they will look mixed, but they soon separate and will not perform as a mixture. Trying to mix Law and Grace may seem to work for a short time, but the results are inevitably confusion and spiritual decline.



## PART 4

Past and Future:

The Crisis of the Cross

THE Event

Saved and Unsaved in All the Ages

Kingdom Considerations



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### **Impact and Future of the Age of Grace**

Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. (*Benjamin Franklin*)

Liberty is the right to choose, freedom is the result of that choice. (*Unknown Source*)

Being democratic is not enough, a majority cannot turn what is wrong into right. In order to be considered truly free, countries must also have a deep love of liberty and an abiding respect for the rule of law. (*Margaret Thatcher*)

#### **Freedom and Liberty**

Spiritual freedom and liberty are spiritual blessings requiring further analysis. The goal is to consider these factors from a world-wide perspective and with long time-frame in view, in order to understand how the Age of Grace has impacted freedom and liberty. The evidence we have studied to this point, indicates the world's population crept along at a low rate for thousands of years. In some areas of the world, the population grew faster than in others, but the general trend was for a slow increase. Many preconditions had to be met before the population could grow at a faster rate. Population increase was dependent upon reliable food sources, domesticated plants and animals, understanding health, type of government, and so on, as previously discussed. For example, one of the factors leading to an increase in population was the domestication of a reliable grain crop(s) with sufficient protein, capable of being stored for long periods. The first grain to be domesticated was wheat, and that occurred around 8000 BC in the Fertile Crescent. However, wheat domestication in other parts of the world occurred much later. In many other ways, besides plant domestication, one part of the world would have a relatively advanced civilization while another part was living in the Stone Age (as do some tribes in New Guinea and in the Amazon today). Countless factors had to come together in large portions of the globe for the world's population to increase rapidly. Not all parts of the world were at a point in their development to allow population expansion when the AOG began; thus, world population rose only slowly. From the start of our Age (~41 AD), until around 1750 AD, the population growth was slow, but steadily increasing as more and more cultures around the world were able to capitalize on discoveries and advancements, either their own or learned from others.

Part of the increase in population growth was due to governance. Long before Christ, as societies became more advanced, they tended to shift from local bands and tribes to larger and larger govern-

ments. Large, stable governments facilitated civil projects for ensuring food resources (like large-scale irrigation and storage projects), such as those Joseph was involved with in Egypt. Larger governments allowed for the construction of temples, enabled society to have professional military forces to protect the populous, and fostered the development of institutions like libraries and universities; all of these advancements enabled the culture to develop even more. Advanced governments enabled some people to be freed from the ubiquitous need of food gathering and production, allowing specialists to develop in many fields. Eventually there were technologists, metallurgists, skilled craftsmen, city builders, philosophers, and so forth. The advances in governance enabled people to actually have free time to make discoveries, express imagination, become literate, to study science....

Throughout human history, societies have been very diverse in their structure and in the number of people involved. Jared Diamond has studied and documented the development of societies and has grouped societies into four categories.<sup>66</sup> Bands were the first and the smallest societal groups, generally around five to eighty people, most or all of whom were related by birth or marriage. (This would be typical of the early Abraham.) Bands tend to be nomadic, and decisions are made on an informal basis by a leader who acquired that role through qualities such as personality, intelligence, wisdom, or fighting skills. As bands grow, they turn into tribes, with hundreds of people. Tribes tend to live in fixed or semi-fixed villages, and are composed of one kinship group or clan. Usually the tribal leader achieves that role by personal attributes, rather than inheriting the role.

As the number in a society reaches the thousands, the society is termed a chiefdom. Now people live in fixed villages, but the people are not all related by blood or marriage; in fact, many do not know one another by name. When societies reach this size, the ruler must have the right to use force to uphold the laws developed for societal order. The leader has a recognized office and makes the major decisions. The leader generally holds the office by hereditary right. At the chiefdom stage, the society tends to adopt the concept of a monarchy. Finally, a full-blown state develops with over 50,000 people. In a state, there are multiple villages and cities, decision making is centralized, and there are laws and judges. Food production in a state is intensive in order to sustain the population. Once a society reaches the state level, and perhaps in some chiefdoms, divisions of labor evolve, the society becomes stratified by class distinctions, and taxation is imposed to support the government. In a state, and to lesser extent, chiefdoms, public architecture (temples, libraries, universities) becomes the norm, and literacy rises among those in the upper class. An example of the final stage would be Israel after entering the Promised Land and having chosen a king.

All four stages of societies exist in the world today. However, throughout history the general and marked trend from bands, to tribes, to chiefdoms, to states can be traced. This trend is necessary as the population grows. Thus, as the Age of Grace progressed, so did a continuing trend in governance from bands to states. States originally tended to be monarchies or a similar form of government, but there has been a continuing shift in our Age from monarchies to democracies. In a democratic state, all eligible citizens are able to participate equally in the development of laws and national policy, either directly or through elected representatives. The first modern democracies were born around 500 BC, both in Athens and Rome, at roughly the same time.

Monarchies developed before democracies. Over time, people recognized that an absolute monarchy posed too much of a risk because one person controlled the whole nation, and that person could be incompetent or overcome by personal obsessions, thus running the country into ruin. Another problem was the potential of the citizens rebelling if they just could not tolerate conditions any longer, especially

<sup>66</sup> Diamond, Jared; *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*; W. W. Norton & Company; 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10110; 1999.



if the monarch were cruel and inconsiderate (as with Solomon's sons). The potential for rebellion, even with a benevolent monarch, was a problem because people demanded more and more for what they paid in taxation. Even if a monarchy is stable for centuries, history indicates countries with such governments play a weaker role when compared to the typical, more powerful democracies. In a democracy, if the ruler is incompetent or cruel, he or she can be voted out of office by peaceful means, generally preventing national upheaval.

A confirmation of the above paragraph is afforded by an occurrence in 1215. After years of unsuccessful foreign policies and heavy taxation, England's King John was facing possible rebellion. As king, he made the laws, but was not subject to them. He agreed to a charter of liberties known as the Magna Carta (or Great Charter) that placed him and England's future sovereigns under a rule of law. The Magna Carta eventually became the foundation for the English system of common law, and later generations celebrated the Magna Carta as a symbol of freedom from oppression. In 1776, the Founding Fathers of the United States of America looked to this charter as a historical precedent for asserting their liberty from the English crown.

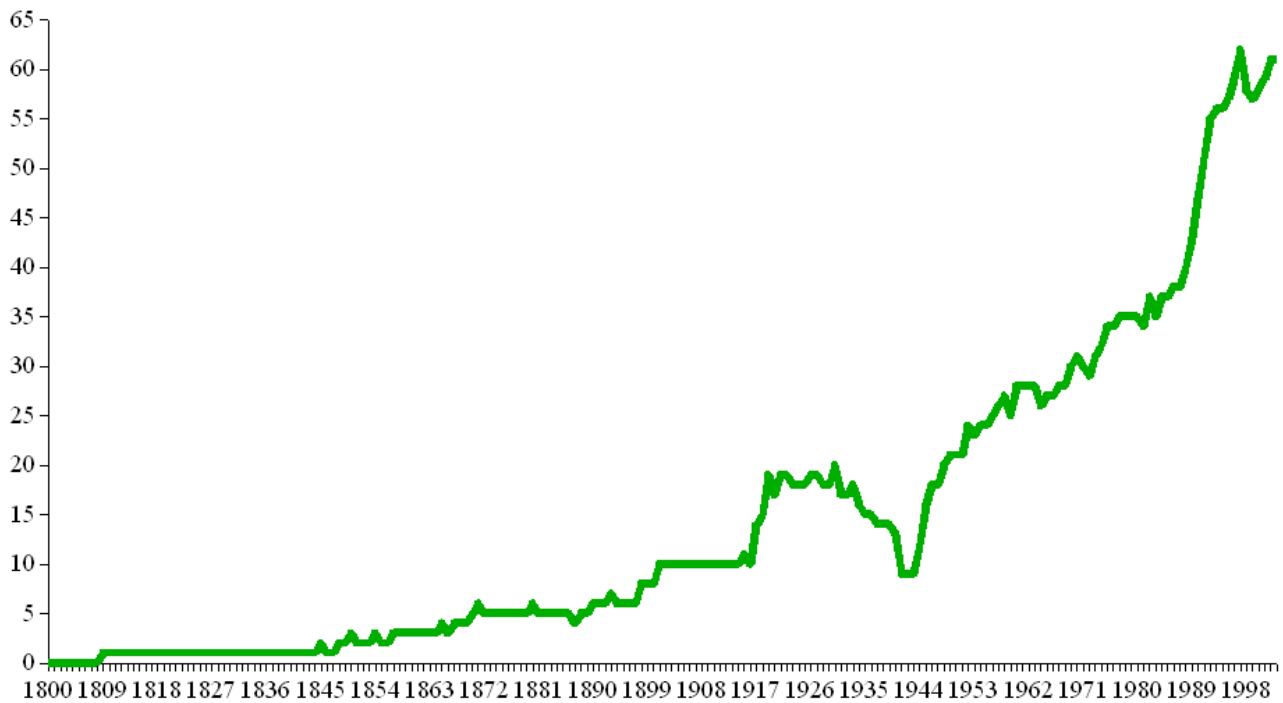
Perhaps the most important aspect of a democracy is the freedom that it provides its people. The value of personal freedom is beyond anyone's comprehension. In a democracy, people are allowed to express themselves more freely than in a monarchy. Democracies allow various opinions and points of view, and final decisions can be made to satisfy individual needs. The multiple and assorted opinions, combined as one dynamic force, are much stronger than the opinion of a single person. Scripture teaches a multitude of counselors are wiser than just one, since one person making important decisions cannot properly evaluate all the factors involved or the needs of every individual (Prov. 11:14). This trend towards democracy indicates this form of government seems the most prone to survive and to best serve the citizens. It gives the individual a stronger voice and a stronger sense of personal freedom. For these reasons, fewer monarchies remain in the world today, and those that remain play a smaller role in world politics than do democracies. A democracy affords the most individual freedom, ensures that everyone has the same rights, and provides equality and liberty at the state level, albeit imperfectly. The majority of the world's countries are now governed by democracies, defined as a state in which the citizens enjoy political participation, constraints are placed on the power of the executive, and civil liberties are guaranteed.

Most Christians believe the governing authorities are ordained by God, but, quite possibly, Romans 13:1 is a reference to the general principle (or institution) of governmental authority, not to specific leaders, even though the latter has certainly occurred. So, we can safely say the institution of government is from God; in addition, the advancement toward more democracies in the Age of Grace very probably was designed by God. The fact there was a noticeable increase in the world's population right around the time of the first democracies, 500 BC, is more than curious. God knew, and humans learned, that a democratic state had more to offer people than a monarchy, so that was the inexorable direction of governance. Not only did democracies offer more to individuals, but they also spurred many other developments that allowed Christianity to flourish. Was it mere coincidence that the United States of America, and many other democracies were born right around the time when the world's population began to explode? Rather than coincidence, most likely it was the Divine providence of God preparing and directing world events.

The graph below shows the tremendous growth in democracies around the world in the last two centuries. The rise of democracies has been briefly interrupted by the atrocities during the two World Wars; however, the number of democracies has been growing steadily, even more rapidly after the

breakup of the Soviet Union in 1989. The increase in world population curve (see Figure 6.2) and the growth of democracies follow each other remarkably. This correlation may indicate that when our Age reached the proper time, around 1750 AD, conditions were not only prime for the world's population to explode, but for that explosion to be complemented by the personal freedom and liberty provided by democratic states.

**Number of nations scoring 8 or higher on the Polity IV scale 1800–2003**



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polity\\_data\\_series](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polity_data_series)

**Figure 8.1.** Number of nations from 1800–2003 scoring eight (8) or higher on the Polity IV scale, a measure of democracy. Polity is defined as a political or governmental organization; a society, or institution with an organized government, state, or body politic.

To qualify as a democracy in the figure above, a given political system has to guarantee freedom and equality. Moreover, it has to optimize the interdependence between freedom and equality by means of control. Control is understood to be control of the people by the government, as well as control of the government by the people. The Polity IV scale goes from  $-10$  to  $+10$ , based upon the rating of many factors for each political system; a rating of  $+6$  to  $+10$  is defined as a democracy.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Determining freedom and democracy around the world is an involved topic. There are two main indexes that measure freedom and democracy: the Freedom House Index and the Polity IV Scale. The Freedom House index includes two main categories, political rights and civil liberties in its index, then those main categories are broken down into subcategories, such as the electoral process, political pluralism and participation, functioning of the government, and so forth. The Polity IV democracy index includes factors such as competitiveness of executive recruitment, openness of executive recruitment, constraints on the chief executive, regulation of participation and competitiveness of participation.... The Freedom House Index and the Polity IV scale have a good correlation. In the 2009 rating of 158 countries, the correlation coefficient was 0.875 (0 means no correlation and 1.0 is a perfect correlation). The good correlation between the two methods means our purposes can be served by either method. We use these data to provide evidence of the increase in democracies and freedom over the last several centuries. The data can be used improperly by some to promote various political agendas, which is not our desire.

Personal freedom, for the saved and unsaved, can be ensured through governments, especially democracies. Personal freedom and true spiritual freedom have an interesting relationship. True spiritual freedom is peculiar to believers in our Age, assured by faith in Jesus Christ. Believers in the AOG are free of the Law and all its restrictions and rules, which were a yoke upon a person's neck, enslaving her or him. *"And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal 4:6-7). "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1).* The believer is delivered from bondage to the Law and from the bondage of sin. Sin no longer reigns in our lives; the tethers have been broken, and we can now serve God out of our own free will. The Law no longer controls us for we are free of the Law through Christ. Similarly, we are set free from the bondage of sin; and for the first time in history, we have the indwelling Holy Spirit to help us resist sin. The Spirit helps us further by unshackling our minds, and creating Christ-like attitudes, virtues, and desires in our hearts. Finally, we are free to serve and honor Him out of love, rather than a requirement of law or rule. This is spiritual freedom.

The believer experiences true spiritual freedom as an unalterable truth of our Age. Our spiritual freedom comes to us through Christ; it is invigorating and liberating. Spiritual freedom results in a more productive spiritual life because it is infused by God and guided from within. Most of us can relate to the fact our spiritual freedom creates a sense of well-being and makes us feel good inside knowing we are right with God. Feeling good on the inside and being right with God are inspiring and stimulating for the spiritual life.

Spiritual freedom works in our lives, and, in a similar manner, personal freedom works in society (government). The degree of personal freedom in society depends on the form of government in which a person lives. Personal freedom, best exemplified in democracies, leads to increased creativity and productivity in the secular realm because of the motivation and stimulation inherent in freedom. Benjamin Franklin's famous quote, "Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom," is best understood in light of Christianity. Believers are virtuous because of the Savior's imputed attributes; however, if Franklin is correct, believers are more adept at sustaining personal freedom via governance than the unsaved. Those enslaved to sin and the Law will need to revert to having masters, to which Franklin's quote continues, "As nations become corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters." The best hope for freedom-loving countries is faith in Christ, and if nations turn away from the true freedom in Christ, reversion to personal and social bondage is the probable outcome. This will be the case when the restrainer (Body of Christ) is removed, at which time the antichrist will be all too happy to fill the role of master.

Under the Law, people were in bondage, and that bondage brought fear. Romans 8:15 addresses spiritual freedom and its affect upon us by removing fear: *"For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, Abba, Father."* Believers no longer need to have the fear of not measuring-up, being rejected, being condemned.... In the Age of Grace, we are free of bondage to the Law and sin, and thus not again subject to the resulting fear. This is liberty. Fear is crippling, and stifles discovery and inquiry, while liberty and freedom are celebrants, creating minds eager to learn and discover God's handiwork. *"Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17).* Human liberty is seen when the Lord is guiding our thoughts, emotions, values, character, and desires. When He guides us, we have liberty because there is no fear of measuring-up; Christ met all the requirements for us. He is the full measure and we have it. There is no fear of condemnation, for there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1). There is no fear of rejection for we are accepted in the beloved (Christ) and we belong to Him (Eph. 1:6, 2:13). The believer does not need to fear failure, for He can make good result from even our failures. His internal

guidance is not an alternative form of mental bondage, for we have free will to do what we want. He provides the guidance, otherwise lacking, for us to make good decisions.

The way God operates in our Age, exhilarates the recipients of grace, creating minds and an environment conducive to discovery and with a passion to know Him more. Freedom and liberty engender confidence, and confidence means a person can think independently, create, take chances, accept failure with the courage to go on, and live without the millstone of guilt. For the first time, we can pursue spiritual growth and knowledge without fear of breaking religious rules or obligations. We are free to express our inner self without fear of censure. We can exercise our liberty as we pursue a spiritual journey to find our purpose in life, within God's larger plan. Thankfully, Satan did not know any of this, or he would have made sure it did not happen.

Spiritual freedom and personal freedom in democracies have changed the world in ways Satan could not have foreseen. Had he known how the AOG would impact the world, he would have made a different choice about the Cross. Our Age extended time, allowing for discoveries, democracies, a massive increase in population, an environment conducive to exploration, and so on. The world's population has increased in our Age, and the number of people in the world experiencing some level of increased freedom has also increased. The result is advanced societies making discoveries and bringing the Gospel to the far corners of the globe. The Salvation, blessings, carry-over effect, freedom, and liberty that we have discussed, made our Age something that God had to keep secret from Satan. These items are a result of God's top secret program. Had Satan gotten a glimpse of our Age, he would not have worked through earthly rulers to crucify Christ. If Christ were not crucified, well, you know....

John F. Kennedy said, "The cost of freedom is always high, but Americans have always paid it. And one path we shall never choose, and that is the path of surrender, or submission." Yes, personal freedom comes at a high cost, often the blood of patriots. On the spiritual level, our freedom in Christ is similar; it was secured for us by the blood of Another. The benefits of that blood are given to us at no cost. However, that blood was required to be shed at all costs, to provide our freedom from sin's consequences. The secret ensured the "Another" was crucified.

### **The Population Ceiling**

The world's population growth curve, Figure 6.1, shows exponential growth in the latter centuries. Notable about that growth is the corresponding numbers of people around the world who have placed their faith in Christ. Population growth does have its positive aspects; however, a troubling fact is obvious: the curve is shooting almost straight upward and that cannot last forever. There is no known way the earth can support the continued explosion in population in the long-term. One can easily imagine the world is approaching a crisis never before seen; however, God may intervene in some way or, through His providence, the growth curve may slow or even reverse.

At some time, if the growth curve continues, agricultural production will peak, and the huge world population will not have the food resources required. There are no new continents to be discovered, as in the past. Climate change most likely will work against supporting more population. If the climate gets warmer, there will be major coastal flooding around the world and unbearable conditions at lower latitudes. If the earth experiences a Little Ice Age, like in 1400–1800 AD, there will be less habitable land and less food production. Some suggest it is possible humans could populate another planet, but help in the form of relocating billions of people seems remote.

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The surest sign that intelligent life exists elsewhere in the universe is that it has never tried to contact us. (*Bill Watterson*)

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The maximum sustainable world population is estimated to be around 10-12 billion people. The world will reach a population of 10 billion before 2100. If the 10-12 billion figure is reasonably accurate, the nearly straight-up population curve spells impending problems on earth in the twenty-first century. Of course, God knows the outcome of all this, but we tend to ignore what is unpleasant and go on our merry way until reality strikes us in the face. If the experts are wrong, and the earth can feed a population much larger than thought, a day of reckoning still will come, unless God intervenes. If He does not intervene, there will be little respite from dramatic, worldwide changes in the not-to-distant future.

The experts have been terribly wrong in the past. In the 1970s, those who supposedly knew the climate trends said by the year 2000 there would be a new ice age, there would be 100-200 million deaths a year due to starvation, civilization as we know it would end, and the world's oil reserves would run out (except for those needed for national defense). Decades after these predictions, the world has continued to feed the masses of people, no ice age has occurred, civilization has continued, and the oil supply remains abundant; in fact, there is enough for normal life through the end of the twenty-first century.<sup>68</sup> <sup>69</sup> Some religious experts said the Rapture would occur in 1988, which proved to be just one of many false end-times predictions. More recently, the global warming scare predicted that by 2015 the Arctic ice cap would be melted, polar bears would be extinct, the coasts of the continents would be flooded, and so on, none of which came true. We see, then, that experts can be very wrong. Just as those experts were wrong, perhaps fears of over population will end up being equally unfounded. However, experts are not always wrong, and common sense indicates something will occur to change the present trend in population growth. So, what can we say about the world's population growth that is not unduly speculative?

1. *Stabilization.* If the world's population stabilizes, by slowing down or leveling off, it is possible life could continue, much as we know it, for a long time. This scenario is based upon the world's population growth changing dramatically from that of the early twenty-first century. Most probably, such a change would be the result of population control and/or reaction to the ability of the earth to provide food resources. Population control may be the result of self-limiting factors or human intervention, resulting in a reasonably stable population. The stabilization in population could take place over centuries, just as it increased. Of course, God may have planned a way for this leveling-off to take place without any calamity, but we do not know. A change in the world's population growth, from today's upward pace to a significant slow-down or leveling-off, is something that has never occurred in historic times.

2. *Dramatic Change.* As great as the population increase has been historically, there may be a future reversal in the form of a dramatic change in population. A dramatic change could be due to

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<sup>68</sup> [www.adventuresinenergy.org/What-Are-Oil-and-Natural.../Will-We-Run-Out.html](http://www.adventuresinenergy.org/What-Are-Oil-and-Natural.../Will-We-Run-Out.html)

<sup>69</sup> In addition to new natural gas and oil fields, Scientists have found there is an incredible amount of a totally unused source of energy—methane hydrate. Methane hydrate exists under permafrost areas and under water in the continental shelves; but, the means of "mining" it for everyday use have not been developed. Methane hydrate is a solid similar to ice, in which large amounts of methane gas is trapped. This "ice" releases the trapped methane gas at normal atmospheric pressures, resulting in ice that burns (actually the methane is burning). Methane hydrate is a carbon-based fuel. Experts now realize there is enough of this fuel to last hundreds, if not thousands, of years.

humans finding it impossible to regulate population, and the unabated population growth resulting in predictable disasters sometime in the next century. Disasters are predictable in their consequences, not necessarily in time. The consequences of overpopulation generally occur in the form of famines, wars, pandemics, and pestilence. The occurrence of antibiotic resistant bacteria, new diseases ... may help lead to such disasters. Such disasters have always existed in various places around the world, but this scenario would be worldwide in scope. Such wide-scale disasters are the types of calamities predicted in the Bible to occur during the Tribulation.

3. *Disaster.* The world's population could continue at the present rate, but that continuance may end in disaster. Instead of a dramatic decline, another scenario would suggest natural disasters as the cause. Such disasters are the stuff of movies, but fiction may become reality if there were an asteroid or meteor strike, super volcanic activity, nuclear holocaust, and so on.

The increase in world population in the Age of Grace has had a positive effect upon Christianity. Yet, in this century or the next, something very unusual will need to occur to prevent over-population from reversing the positive effects of the last couple centuries. For many people, the very unusual solution to the population problem is to say Christ will come at the Rapture<sup>70</sup> to remove the believers. Then, some seven years later, will be the Second Coming when He establishes His Kingdom upon the earth. Matter solved! However, our wishes rarely coincide with God's ways, nor is the easy solution always the correct one.

### **Something Unusual Will Happen**

The world's population growth cannot continue at its present rate for much longer, as suggested by the three possible scenarios shown above. Many Christians trust the solution is far more simple—the Rapture. The Rapture certainly would fit the category of being something unusual, and it will solve the population problem. However, the Bible indicates there will be a spiritual decline prior to the Rapture; perhaps both a decline in population and in spirituality are in store for this world.

The Apostle Paul thought the Rapture would occur in his lifetime (1 Thes. 4:15), a time when there were many tragedies and adversities in the early years of Christianity. But Christ did not come. We learn that trust and hope are good, but Christ may not deliver us from adversity. We have experienced the reality of life, and know the teaching of the Word, by which we come to realize God often works through adversity, rather than delivering us from it. We do not lose hope because He has not returned in over two thousand years; instead, we realize He has a purpose that may not include coming in our lifetime. We do know the Rapture will deliver believers from the wrath to come (1 Thes. 1:10, 5:9). The wrath referred to is that of the last days, that is, the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. The issue of when He will come in the Rapture is tied to the last days, that is, He will snatch the believers out of this world just prior to the last days of wrath; this is our blessed hope.

The conditions at the end our Age do not include earthquakes, wars, famine, and so on; these will occur in the last days after we are Raptured. Thus, visible and physical signs will not define the end of our Age; they are signs for the future age. The Bible does not say much about the physical conditions on the earth near the end of our Age. The prevailing conditions that are mentioned at the end of the Age are spiritual

<sup>70</sup> Some readers may not be sure about the Rapture, tending to believe there is no Rapture. Such readers will most likely believe in the Second Coming of Christ, some seven plus years later than the pretribulation Rapture. The Rapture is important from a theological standpoint and for our hope in Christ; however, it is only seven or so years before the Second Coming, so the discussion on population is applicable either way.

and moral in nature: *"Now the spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth"* (1 Tim. 4:1-3). Similarly, the last days of our Age are also described in this way, *"But know this, that in the last days perilous time will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power..."* (2 Tim. 3:1-5). The problem is, the conditions described have always been true, to some extent, so how can a person use these verses to know when we are approaching the end? If we knew, then we would know the approximate time of the Rapture, even though not the exact time.

The answer to this question may be found in the words of Jesus Christ concerning the end times. In Matthew, Jesus addresses the disciples' question concerning the signs of His coming at the end of the age. Of course, the age the disciples had in mind, because it was all they knew about, was their age (which continues after the interruption in time caused by the Age of Grace). So, Jesus discussed His Second Coming and the signs preceding it. This may be confusing to the reader, for how can the signs after our Age teach us anything about our Age? The answer lies in understanding how to best interpret Scripture, which will help us understand what Paul was saying in First Timothy 4 and Second Timothy 3, above.

Jesus said there would be signs for all to observe during the end times (Tribulation and Day of the Lord). To be perfectly clear, the believers in our Age will already be in Heaven when the end times occur, but we can learn from His words. The signs given during the first half of the Tribulation will be *"'And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and the kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places'"* (Matt. 24:6-7). The wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes will occur during the Tribulation; they are precursors of the end. When a person sees these early signs during the first half of the Tribulation, they should be concerned, but not overly troubled. However, the signs become more specific and horrible as time proceeds. In the middle of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will stand in the holy place and proclaim that he is God. When the Antichrist does this, it is time for immediate action (Matt. 24:15-27). This sign they must heed and immediately flee to the mountains, where God will protect them. There is more to happen on the earth before He actually comes, but the end is near. Finally, the last signs are given, *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven....'"* (Matt. 24:29-30a). Immediately after the Tribulation, there will be clear and unmistakable signs that everyone better understand. When these last signs are revealed, His Second Coming is a heartbeat away; people better understand the gravity of the situation, for the Lord will appear and they must be ready.

Jesus was not describing conditions prior to the Rapture, but the conditions after the Rapture. He was describing events before His Second Coming (some seven plus years after the Rapture). Most of us have read books and heard sermons describing how earthquakes have been increasing in the latter decades, how many new diseases there are, and how much more often war is occurring, all supposedly designed to making us understand the Lord is returning soon. This sort of teaching is not correct. As an example, consider earthquakes: if they have been increasing year after year for many decades, what does that tell

us? Nothing! Earthquakes increasing year after year may only be showing that we have better scientific equipment to monitor quakes and better communications in remote areas of the world to report them. A graph of the number of earthquakes over time would only reveal something of importance if there were a drastic increase to the normal curve, for example, a large straight-up shift in the number of quakes. Thus, a drastic increase in earthquakes, famines, and war will be signs that the end is near, as Jesus mentioned. It takes a major increase in such events to be a recognizable sign that something very unusual and obvious is taking place.

So, how do Jesus' words help us understand when our Age may be nearing its end? From what He said, we realize what will alert us of the end of our Age is not a normal increase in departures from the faith and perilous times, *but drastic changes*. What Paul is alluding to, in his comments of latter times and last days of our Age, is just that—a drastic increase in these events. The events and circumstances Paul mentions have always been true, but a drastic change should make us take note. When we see those events shoot straight upward, then that may be what we need in order to understand the end of our Age is near.

Accordingly, the Rapture may not be as soon as many think or desire; however, no one can possibly predict the time. If we see a steady increase in the items Paul mentioned, that may give general information, but provides no specific date. The prophetic clock is stopped during the AOG, so formerly prophesied events are not being fulfilled in our Age.<sup>71</sup> Thus, there are no specific events (short of what Paul says, as noted above) one can use to predict the time of the Rapture. No one knows where we are in human history, as far as God's plan is concerned.

The Rapture is imminent (can occur at any time), but that does not mean it is necessarily in the near future. If the Rapture does not occur soon, then changes in the world must occur. At this time, all that can be said is that the Rapture could be 1, 10, 100, or 1,000 years from now. If it is over 100 years, then a change in the skyrocketing population growth is likely. All my life, since I was old enough to listen carefully (the 1950s and onward), the Rapture was said to be very soon, usually claimed to be within several years. As proof of this, the speaker would mention the increase in famines, wars, and earthquakes; not recognizing these signs have little relevance for our Age. The real proof of these prophecy experts, the supposed coup de grace, was the pending formation of a ten-nation confederacy, or league, out of the former Roman Empire. A ten-nation confederacy was supposedly the quintessential proof the end was near, since it was mentioned by Daniel as an event that would occur during the Tribulation. First, their proof was the League of Nations, the intergovernmental effort after World War 1 that was thought to herald the final ten-nation confederacy. That League did not lead to the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy. Next, the European Common Market was held up as proof the Bible was correct, and, at one point, boasted of ten nations—clear evidence we were living in the biblical end times. The European Common Market fizzled out. Through it all, the Bible remained true, while human whimsical interpretations failed again and again. More recently, the European Union is given as proof that biblical

<sup>71</sup> The idea that prophecy is not being fulfilled today may be troubling to many. The issue is related to the use of the word prophecy. The prophecies of the Old Testament and Gospel records are considered part of the Scripture that began to be made known from the beginning; such Scripture is said to be part of prophecy. However, Paul's writings contain the mystery, information that was intentionally hidden from the beginning; such Scripture is part of the mystery. Thus, to keep some distinction between that revealed from the beginning, and that revealed in due time, the word prophecy can be used in a restrictive manner. The restrictive use of the word prophecy refers to that Scripture revealed from the beginning. Paul's writings concerning the Rapture and the last days (in 1 and 2 Timothy) are part of the mystery, and by the restrictive definition, not part of prophecy. However, the reader may think that when God foretells of the Rapture and the conditions at the end our Age, those become a prophesied event, which is also correct, by the broader definition. Since the AOG interrupted the flow of human history and prophesied events, we use the word prophecy in the restrictive manner to help differentiate what was mystery from that revealed from the beginning.



prophecy is taking place. However, it now appears the European Union is about to go the way of the European Common Market. None of these predicted events were, or will be, the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy. Prophecy experts believe the Scripture is true, but often read into Scripture what they believe. Through it all, the Bible remains true, in spite of human failures; it does not need experts to prove it to be true. However, the bombardment of inappropriate prophetic predictions and their inevitable failure have numbed people to the truth; like the boy crying "wolf," no one listens anymore.

The rational, non-hyped, version of when the Rapture will occur, will be discussed briefly. The first disclaimer is that no one knows when it will occur, and there is no way to figure it out. However, there are some prophesied events (from the Old Testament and Gospels) that do describe events *after* the Rapture. If those events seem to be developing today, not in direct fulfillment of prophecy, but in shadow form, then such developments may be precursors of the actual fulfillment. However, this sort of approach is very similar to that of using the European Common Market, only to be proven wrong. Proceeding very cautiously, we know that during the Tribulation the Jewish Temple must exist (Dan. 9:27, 11:31, 12:11; Matt. 24:15). Therefore, it must be built during the Tribulation or even before. There are preparations for restoring Temple worship today, which may indicate the end is approaching, or those efforts may be put on hold for hundreds of years. In a similar vein, the actual city of Babylon, in Iraq, must exist during the Tribulation and/or Day of the Lord. Babylon has to be in existence and operating as a major trade/religious center, according to prophecy, and it takes many years for a city to achieve that position. Some efforts to restore Babylon began in the 1970s and 1980s, but those efforts have all come to a screeching halt. If we understand the prophecies of Babylon correctly (Isa. 13:19-22, 14:4; Jer. 50:39-40; Rev. 17:5, 18:2), then Babylon may be rebuilt, or under construction, before the Rapture.<sup>72 73 74 75</sup> If these examples are reasonable, and there are more, news of activity related to a new Temple or the city of Babylon may indicate when the Rapture is approaching. At this time, the Rapture seems further in the future than we may want to admit. If so, then we wonder what may lie ahead for those living in our Age.

Repeating what was mentioned above, these are the conditions Paul describes for the end of our Age, *"Now the spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons"* (1 Tim. 4:1). Similarly, the last days are also described in this way, *"But know this, that in the last days perilous time will come..."* (2 Tim. 3:1). These moral and spiritual conditions have always existed, but when we see a dramatic increase, then we will know something monumental is about to happen. The increase will have to be notable and obvious, in order for us to differentiate it from the norm. The next section, on "Spiritual Decline," is intended to help us see how Christianity itself may play a role leading to the very conditions Paul mentions.

### **Spiritual Decline**

The world's population growth has led to advancements in Christianity, often in ways we have not recognized. However, the evidence strongly suggests that population growth, in the long-term, has to slow down, level off, or decline, if humanity is to survive. What will happen in Christianity? Most likely, there will be major changes of some sort. We know that true faith often prospers under adversity; indeed, the Bible indicates adversity is common in every believer's life. However, adversity in the form of

<sup>72</sup> Dyer, Charles H.; *The Rise of Babylon*; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.; Wheaton, IL; 1991.

<sup>73</sup> Hagee, John; *Jerusalem Countdown*; Frontline; Lake Mary, FL; 2006.

<sup>74</sup> Jeremiah, David; *The Handwriting on the Wall*; Word Publications; 1992.

<sup>75</sup> Jeffrey, Grant; *Armageddon—Appointment with Destiny*; Frontier Research Publications; Toronto, Ontario; 1997.

personal hardships and trials is one issue, but the issues we must consider are a worldwide upheaval in civilization and what that might mean to Christianity.

In the previous chapters, it was noted that the growth and spread of Christianity somewhat paralleled that of the world's population growth, so as the world's population grew, Christianity also grew. While Christianity was growing, it went through the Dark Ages, the Renaissance, the Reformation, spiritual revivals, discovery, advancement in democracies, and so on, until today. If the world's population were to decline, due to natural or cataclysmic causes, Christianity most likely would experience a decline in numbers, but would there also be a corresponding spiritual decline? If the answer is yes, such a condition may be what Paul is referring to in First and Second Timothy. Christians could suffer in the physical realm (famines, pestilence, etc.) and spiritually, due to the breakdown in the number of democracies, failure to capitalize on previous discoveries, spiritual declension, and rejection of the Reformation and the biblical truths discovered thereafter. If such were the case, the regression in social order and Christianity could lead to a dark world, one that has not existed for centuries.

What will happen in the future is beyond our knowledge, so the purpose here is to broach this subject for the purpose of creating discussion and debate. We do know that Paul predicts that before the Rapture, the world would be characterized by departure from the faith and perilous times. There seems to be, at least in the United State of America, a developing spiritual condition that may be approaching Paul's words. Interestingly, it is developing relatively rapidly. Sir Robert Anderson had an inkling of this over a hundred years ago, when he noted spiritual decline would be evidenced by "a high morality and earnest philanthropy, but wholly devoid of all that is distinctively Christian. 'Free from dogma' is the favorite expression: and this 'freedom' means the ignoring of the great truths of Christianity" (re-quoted from Chapter 7). In recent years, in many churches and seminaries, there has been a decided shift away from sound Bible teaching in an effort not to offend anyone. In place of sound biblical teaching, religious "fluff" is presented, meaning nicely presented messages with little substance—spiritual milk. The lack of sound teaching is leading to a spiritual decline.

People flock to the churches that provide milk, which is fine for seekers; however, those who need meat must content themselves with less. Those who want meat have been conditioned to believe they must deny themselves so that seekers can be saved. The spiritual needs of some are met, while the majority suffers in silence, as though they must not grow spiritually in order for others to be saved. This condition is directly related to the "no dogma" position of many churches. The exclusive emphasis on simple topics related to morality, self-help, kindness, and social responsibility is creating an imbalance in teaching. This imbalance is in direct contrast to the example set in Scripture, where the needed balance in spiritual teaching is not only provided but required of us (2 Tim. 3:17; 4:2-3; 1 Tim. 4:13) as stewards of the mystery. Surely, but not so slowly, there is a shift in teaching that emphasizes social issues, simplistic Bible topics, acts of goodness and tolerance, and environmental consciousness. This rapid shift in Christian churches may be, or the precursor of, the conditions Paul mentions.

Listed below are three basic types of large, influential, Christian churches; of course there are more. These basic types of churches are representative of, and perhaps the result of, a complacency toward spiritual things in First-World nations. The First-World nations, the very nations that have prospered most in the AOG, seem to be moving away from their first love. At the same time, the struggling nations often have thriving churches hungry for the Word. Thus, in Europe, Canada, Australia ... there has been a decided coolness toward Christianity for many decades; in America and elsewhere, there is a shift toward complacency as the no-dogma position prevails. At the same time, a spiritual awakening is occurring in Africa, the Orient, and numerous other places around the world. The churches listed below

represent a cross section of Christianity in the very nations that have prospered abundantly because of the AOG. The future of Christianity may be reflected in the trends of these churches, a dramatic change from what has been the historic trend in Christianity.

- Type 1 represents churches that tend to have a very formal worship style, which revere tradition, but are held hostage by the past and the teachings of the founding fathers. These churches often developed their doctrine independently of Scripture, and they have adopted many non-biblical beliefs and manners of administration. Such churches are often very stable and enduring, which are good aspects; however, these churches are inflexible and intolerant of alternative Christian beliefs. The faith required for Salvation is taught to include works of righteousness and the sacraments. These churches are now very accepting of science, but were not accepting in the past. A high degree of intellectualism is mistaken for, and often supplants, true spiritual understanding. A social gospel has largely replaced biblical teaching. People are not encouraged to read their Bibles or study on their own.
- Type 2 represents churches that rely upon the past and what the founding fathers taught. They tend to be formal in worship, but there is scriptural teaching. Doctrine is based upon the founders' understanding of the Bible. Such churches tend to be stable in their beliefs and fairly inflexible concerning new ideas in the spiritual realm. A social gospel is presented as the means of bringing in the Kingdom, which is not considered to be an earthly Kingdom. Salvation is a confusion of faith, works, and sacraments. They tend to accept scientific findings, but are weak in solid Bible teaching.
- Type 3 represents churches that originally were devoted to the teachings of the Bible, developed their doctrine from the Bible, and did not rely upon founding fathers as anything more than godly individuals. Such churches were often in the vanguard of Bible teaching and evangelism. The acceptance of new beliefs has enabled them to advance our understanding of the Bible, yet, over time, that acceptance resulted in instability. Sometimes the acceptance of new ideas was good, allowing new thoughts into the churches, but sometimes it meant following unsound concepts, such as reliance upon experiential occurrences. Oftentimes these churches do not accept the findings of science because such findings challenge accepted beliefs. Because they believe there is a biblical answer for every matter, many have fallen prey to pseudoscientific teachings, with an aura of biblicalism, to answer tough scientific questions. There is a mixture of tolerance and intolerance among the various churches with respect to social issues. The no-dogma approach to teaching is becoming the norm. The doctrine of Salvation is taught to be by God's grace through faith, but that teaching is slowly being confused, a logical consequence of using the legal teachings of the Gospels and non-Pauline Epistles for the means of Salvation today.

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*The very nations that have prospered the most from the AOG seem to be moving away from their first love.*

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Over time, the three types of churches noted above, and there are more, have tended to become weaker in their teaching of the Bible. Many have adopted the no-dogma mantra, trying to appeal to all by sacrificing sound teaching. These churches teach tolerance, morality, and philanthropy, which is fine up to a point. Unfortunately, such teaching has a subtle exclusionary effect on other important biblical

principles. The doctrine of Salvation is often compromised. Teachings tend to skirt around or ignore the Pauline Epistles, the very books containing God's designated truth for our Age. The near exclusion of the Epistles, specifically inspired for our Age, causes these churches to confuse the Body of Christ with the earthly Kingdom. The resulting confusion inexorably results in teachings for today which make our Salvation and sanctification, to some degree, based upon works. The great truths of Christianity are suffering for lack of sound teaching.

The advancing spiritual decline due to a lack of sound Bible teaching portends a dim future for Christianity. Today, teaching revolves around cute stories and an obsession with the Gospels and non-Pauline Epistles. The lack of depth and imbalance in teaching is obvious, but the retort to this is to claim the preaching of Jesus cannot possibly be overdone; you can well imagine a preacher pounding the pulpit and saying, "If this sort of preaching is wrong, then let me be wrong for Jesus' sake." The obsession with the Gospels does allow a person to speak of Jesus as though He were still a man, and makes the speaker seem to be especially intimate with Him. However, the Pauline Epistles are the books that contain the meat and doctrinal teaching for the Church today. Those books present Jesus Christ as He is today as the Head of the Body, and unveil the spiritual blessings of our Age. It is in them alone that we find the revelation of the mystery and the doctrine for the Body of Christ. The growing obsession with teaching from biblical books not specific for our Age is helping to create confusion and a diminution of spiritual truth. In time, is it possible such teaching will result in ministries becoming *a vast spiritual wasteland*, in which people will go through the motions of worship, but receive little of true spiritual content?

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*Biblical teaching feeds the spirit, and only God knows how to do that and do it correctly; that is why we have the written Word.*

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Political correctness is one thing, but in many places religious correctness is in vogue. Religious correctness is doing and believing what is acceptable in the religious community, perhaps equivalent to having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. For example, the Lord Jesus Christ is spoken of as though He were still in human form, as a man walking among us. Speaking in this manner has an aura of spirituality and is the in-vogue manner of referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. However, the contradiction with Scripture is obvious, "*Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer*" (2 Cor. 5:16). We are to teach and worship Christ as He exists today—the risen Lord in Heaven, the Head of the Body of Christ. The teachings of Who Christ is today, what He is doing in the Body of Christ, and the fact He is seated in Heaven at the Father's right hand, are almost ignored today; in their place, is the nearly exclusive teaching of the earthy carpenter.

The mystery revealed God's completed (fulfilled) Word for mankind. The expression, "completed Word" does not mean God did not inspire any Scripture after Paul, but that the fullness (completeness) of His plan for mankind was revealed as: "*...the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints*" (Col. 1:25-26). The fulfilling of the Word occurred with the revelation of the mystery, and that revealed the Age of Grace, the Body of Christ, and Jesus as the risen, glorified Lord Jesus Christ. The very things Paul so assuredly announced as precious new truths are being

diminished today with the noticeable decline in teaching from the Pauline Epistles. The spiritual impetus of the Reformation and the continued discoveries of biblical truth in the latter centuries are on the wane. Simplistic theological teaching with no dogma and only milk is creating a religious system that does not bode well for Christianity.

Ministries often grow by being inclusive and tolerant, which are fine qualities until they mean not teaching anything controversial or the whole counsel of God: in essence, taking a no-dogma position. Inclusivity is a needed perspective in many ministries to counter the exclusivity that was so strongly taught in the past. Today, ministries are striving for the appropriate balance between the two, but in the process, the main item of teaching of the Word suffers. For example, the exclusive teachings of the past meant that if someone did not believe this or that about a biblical topic, then that person's faith or beliefs were suspect. Today, to counter the past, inclusivity goes too far and avoids many of the very topics Paul maintains as important; those topics are seen as too controversial, even contentious. However, a proper balance requires teaching all Scripture in a non-condemning manner, with the goal of not alienating those who disagree, but compassionately planting the seed and allowing the Spirit to work.

The Bible teaches that doctrine is important; thus, there are times to hold a strong theological position. The Bible indicates we are not to back away from doctrinal teaching; however, we have to make sure our teaching is done in love and with grace (1 Tim. 1:3, 4:6, 6:3; 2 Tim. 3:16, 4:3; Tit. 1:9, 2:1, 2:7). Sound teaching, with doctrine, can edify the Body if done in a gracious manner. However, ungracious teaching of any sort is either offensive or unedifying. Doctrine is often taught as impersonal and fact-oriented. Perhaps the cold, hard facts aspect of doctrinal teaching has helped spawn the warm, emotional teachings of today. The latter teaching is not offensive and satisfies human feelings, but does little for the human spirit. The Bible is full of practical teaching that builds the individual spiritually, supplies the meat of the Word, and at the same time is non-offensive.

Since the inclusiveness of today is sometimes a needed adjustment to the exclusionary teachings of the past, ministries can be in a quandary. The adjustment often takes the form of an imbalance in teaching, or mixing Law and Grace. An imbalance in teaching means the Body suffers, just as if a person were to eat only one type of food. Mixing Law and Grace is a sure road toward spiritual decline. Ministries often find it hard to know how to "feed my sheep" because they can see past abuses in the name of religion. There is always a need to be tolerant, but not at the expense of His truth.

The mystery is the first to suffer from an imbalance in teaching. Avoiding controversial topics means the emphasis and subject matter shift from the in-depth study of the Word or from teaching that edifies the soul and spirit to that of entertainment and emotional passion. Touching one's soul and spirit refers to drawing a person closer to the Lord in a way that increases love and appreciation for the Lord and all He has done, while also fostering a change within our spirit. Truly touching the soul and spirit today is often mistaken to mean touching the emotions by some story that brings tears to the eye of the listener. The listener's soul (mind, emotions, etc.) may indeed be touched, but the spirit (God-conscience part of us) is untouched and untaught. True biblical teaching also feeds the human spirit, and only God knows how to do that, and to do it correctly; that is why He gave us the complete written Word.

The double-edged sword of the present trend towards a spiritual decline is the fact that simple truth is evangelizing many. At the same time, that teaching is making Christianity the abode of spiritual babies/infants. Believers being spiritual infants is nothing new; that was the case in most of the centuries since Christ. In the latter centuries, Christianity has grown and spirituality has increased, but the present trend may be more of a reversal than an advancement. The direction in Christianity today may result in

a reversal in the number of believers; it will certainly reduce the spiritual maturity of believers. We should pray this condition is just temporary. If not, a dearth of solid teaching, due to watering-down of the Word, may eventually result in a world in which true teaching about the Lord and the Bible will be harder and harder to find.

Interestingly, if we are concerned about attacks upon the Word, those attacks are more evident in the watering-down of the Bible than anything else. Reducing the Bible to a humanistic gospel and making it so simple that believers remain infants is far more dangerous than the supposed false teachings of science, psychology, and so on. The trend away from the important teachings of Christianity may be short in duration, but, more than likely, it could be a spiritual decline leading to the very conditions Paul mentioned.

An example of watering-down the Word to make it palatable for the spiritually young is often seen in the teachings about the Kingdom. Years ago, most evangelical churches distinguished between the Age of Grace and the earthly Kingdom. Understanding this distinction required study and spiritual understanding; today, biblical teaching is simplified to make it easier to understand. For the sake of simplicity, it is far easier to understand the Bible if Kingdom teaching is combined with the Age of Grace. Instead of teaching the distinctiveness of the Age of Grace, the common teaching today contends that the Kingdom is meant for us today. Many of these churches would not be classified as amillennialists, because they do teach a future earthly Kingdom. The problem is the teaching of that promised to believers under the Law is made part of the teachings of Grace. Believers today are said to be living in the spiritual aspect of the Kingdom (partially correct), and when He returns, the believers of our Age will reign with Him on earth (incorrect). Thus, the instructions Christ gave for the earthly Kingdom are included as part of the truths for the Age of Grace. The result is a teaching composed of a mixture of Law and Grace. Law and Grace do not mix; they are mutually exclusive (Rom. 11:6). The result of trying to cram Law-based doctrine into Grace teaching creates nothing but confusion.

The goal of simplifying the teaching of the Word often ends up creating biblical misunderstandings concerning what God is doing today. Understanding the mystery is not simple or necessarily easy, but it is essential. If we do not recognize that God revealed special truths for our Age, and revealed those truths after those recorded in the Gospel records, then we are not recognizing God's wisdom. This lack of recognition is a sad but sure way to dishonor the Lord. God had to reveal the truth of the Age of Grace after Christ went to Heaven, and we know that truth could not have been revealed sooner in order to ensure Salvation for everyone. The teaching so prevalent today requires a homogenization of Scripture, such that it is all mixed together and said to apply equally to our Age. Teachings meant for the Kingdom are combined with teaching meant for the AOG. Further, an odd thought process has fostered the belief the Kingdom can somehow be brought into effect by human actions, that is, that we can somehow induce God to bless us, and our actions can help "bring the Kingdom down." This is Law-based thinking, that is, it makes our actions/works somehow an integral part of God's blessings and/or Salvation for us. This confusion of the earthly Kingdom with the Age of Grace has consequences related to the spiritual decline predicted for the end of our Age.

## Discovery, Evidence, and the Word

The Age of Grace has changed the world in countless ways, including advancing civilization, providing for an explosion in population, and promoting Christianity. All these changes had been slowly proceeding for centuries, then they skyrocketed in the last several centuries. In a positive way, the last several centuries have been unique in the annals of human history; however, the evidence of science, anthropology, and the Bible, suggests the latter rapid changes portend some form of readjustment will occur within this or the next century. The Apostle Paul mentions a spiritual decline at the end of our Age, which may already be in progress, as mentioned above.

Recognizing that changes in the world are coming, believers may want to consider what they can best do to promote Christianity. Certainly, Christianity is promoted by having personal beliefs in accordance with the Word and by ensuring quality Bible teaching. Our personal beliefs are an intricate part of the *restraining influence* of the Holy Spirit, for He works best through His Word as it works in our lives. Of course, each of us thinks our beliefs are correct, otherwise we would adjust them. We all need to humble ourselves and recognize that we are blinded in some ways to our own inadequacies. Thus, we can all profit by asking ourselves if the proclamation of the Word is being inadvertently obstructed in some way by our beliefs.

The discussion of faith and science, as parts of our belief system, will continue here. Science is not used here because it is an important issue in everyone's life, but because it provides a relevant discussion point. Whatever the reader's experience may be, he or she will want to ensure personal energies are not wasted on issues that are counter to the purpose of God. Thus, the reader's personal experience may indicate that science is not so much the issue in hindering the proclamation of the Word, as are matters related to politics, religious sidetracks, extremism, prejudice .... As we approach what could be radical changes in our world, each of us will want to ensure our personal issues do not sap our energy, create divisions, or alienate minds. Spiritual decline may take place within ministries, but the goal here is to alert each of us that such a thing can occur in our personal spiritual walk. A person is not promoting the Lord's work if she or he is drained of stamina and spiritual resources because they are squandered on personal issues of little eternal value.

Science as used here is merely as a vehicle for discussion on how we can waste our spiritual resources by taking on causes, or battles, that are not beneficial for the cause of Christ. Of course, science is but one example leading to wasted resources. The problem we all face is thinking our battle is for the cause of Christ when it may not be. We take solace in the fact our battle is championed by other Christians, which is our proof we are standing for the truth. Please consider this: if we fight science at every turn as though it were the enemy of God, are we really promoting His cause? No one expects a believer to accept false science; in fact, neither do scientists (saved or unsaved). However, conducting a constant battle against science by continual attempts to refute it, making snide remarks, and so on, has become an end in itself for many, the supposed mark of a good believer. Guess what: geologists, biologists, and astronomers can be Christians, and many are; in addition, scientific discovery is not evil. As we continue, we must remember this important point: *the Holy Spirit resists lawlessness, not discovery.*

Hugh Miller (1802-1856) was a respected and devout Presbyterian, the voice of the evangelical wing of the Church of Scotland, which ultimately formed the Free Church of Scotland. Miller noted that those who have held that the Bible imparted "...definite physical facts, geographic, geologic, or astronomical" along with moral and spiritual facts have "...almost invariably found themselves involved in monstrous

error."<sup>76</sup> He was well aware that extra-biblical evidence cannot be used for matters of faith since it is not inspired, but that evidence does have value. Indeed, that evidence has frequently been used to correct erroneous interpretations of the Bible. Davis Young, commenting on Miller, wrote, " 'Plain men who set themselves to deduce from the Scripture the figure of the planet' had little doubt that the earth was flat 'until corrected by the geographer'; 'plain men who set themselves to acquire from Scripture some notion of the planetary motions' thought that the sun moved around an earth at rest 'until corrected by the astronomer' ... In sum, plain men quite properly learned the way of salvation from the Bible, but every time they 'sought to deduce from it what it was *not* intended to teach, — the truth of physical science, — they have fallen into extravagant error.' And if such error is casually or, worse, boldly or even belligerently endorsed, it must necessarily mar the overall credibility of the church." <sup>77</sup>

In the past, certain beliefs were supposedly taken directly from the Bible, beliefs such as a flat earth, the earth as the center of the solar system, and perfectly circular planetary orbits. Extra-biblical evidence derived from God's truth in the natural world resulted in these erroneous beliefs being replaced. Today is no different: we also can have false concepts of what the Bible teaches, and that can be a deterrent to people seeing the truth of God in the Age of Grace. Scientific discoveries derived from the evidence in the natural world have helped correct errors of interpretation in the past; we can learn from that example.

The issue of extra-biblical evidence is not one of elevating such evidence to anything close to that of Scripture, but of using such evidence wisely.<sup>78</sup> Extra-biblical evidence often comes from the natural world and to ignore it, or deny it, is to deny evidence that God Himself has placed in His created universe. Thus, the second chapter of this book uses scientific information about the universe, which helps us understand Scripture and enables us to understand what God has done for us in the natural world. The extra-biblical evidence of archeology, like the discoveries at Jericho and Hazor, the Erastus stone, and Hezekiah's tunnel, have proven to be wonderful adjuncts to the biblical testimony.<sup>79</sup> Such evidence, coming from the God who created and sustains the heavens and earth, can in no way undermine the Christian faith. Extra-biblical evidence can serve as a check on our interpretations, reinforce our faith, help us see God in a much broader perspective, and keep us from indulging in exegeses that are not credible—a cause of great harm to Christianity.

A balancing act is required of believers, one of knowing how and when to use extra-biblical evidence and when not to use it. While extra-biblical evidence has great value, we must always temper its use. Scripture stands on its own authority, and that authority is sustained by God. He gives us history, science, archeology, and so forth, to provide evidence, but trying to prove the Bible from secular evidence is a dangerous endeavor. The use of spurious scientific evidence in an attempt to reinforce the Word certainly does not honor God and can be injurious to Christianity. Even legitimate extra-biblical evidence has to be used sagaciously as an apologetic device. The believer cannot fall into the trap of thinking Scripture is more reliable or trustworthy if we can back it up with some sort of evidence. The author wants to be clear: the evidence from non-biblical sources can be used to help ensure our

<sup>76</sup> Young, Davis A.; *The Biblical Flood, A Case Study of the Church's Response to Extrabiblical Evidence*; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1995.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid*

<sup>78</sup> While extra-biblical evidence has value, we have to be very cautious. There is plenty of supposed evidence that is just plain errant. Constant diligence is required to ensure the evidence is truly what is claimed. There is money and notoriety for those who can make startling discoveries and claims, even if they are fraudulent or incorrect. We would be wise always to examine the evidence, and be suspect of anyone claiming to have found something too good to be true (the shroud in which Jesus was wrapped after His death, the bones of Moses, the Ark of the Testimony or that of Noah, etc.). All extra-biblical evidence has to be given the test of time and scholarly scrutiny.

<sup>79</sup> [www.grace4you.com](http://www.grace4you.com) ; Teen Lesson 24 and 25, *Biblical Archeology (parts 1 and 2)*. Posted 2013.



interpretations of the Bible are reasonable; however, such evidence cannot be used to establish our spiritual beliefs.

Understanding His purpose for humans, and how creation fits into that purpose, enables us to have a larger concept of God. This larger concept helps us avoid saying and believing things that are not credible, for doing so would be inadvertently counterproductive. As this chapter continues, it will help tie the beginning and end of this book together, by considering the time and scope of God's actions on our behalf, that is, the larger perspective of God. As previously noted, God's overall plan for humans includes a vast universe and required considerable time to accomplish countless events, at their appointed time. Taking a long time is based upon the fact human developments are time-dependent, even though directed by God. God does not need the time; we do.

We will now look at faith and science again, maybe this time with a little better vision than before, now that we have learned about what has transpired in our Age. In common discourse, God is said to have two books: the written Word of God and the unwritten book of God—the book of nature. The contents of the unwritten book are subject to discovery by anyone, saved or unsaved. The problem with the book of nature is some people try to establish their spiritual beliefs based upon it, but this book primarily relates to the physical universe, not the spiritual. Spiritual truth is primarily found in the written Word of God, which has to be the basis of our beliefs and guides our minds. So, as much as we should respect the unwritten book of God, that book is not to be canonized, that is, our views on nature and its discovery are not to be regarded as inspired by God nor are they equal with the Word of God.

God's unwritten book contains information about what He did to create the natural world (the entire universe) and maybe even some on how He did it. God's book of nature is slowly opened, page by page, as new discoveries are made. The desire to discover and learn, as we explore the wonders of creation, is part of being created in His image: *"The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge"* (Psa. 19:1-2). Notice that God's creation speaks to us and reveals knowledge. This book speaks to the saved and unsaved; as such, it is to be respected as a God-designed way to speak to the lost and a way to utter truth to the saved. The essence of this book is often of a scientific and mathematic nature, but other disciplines are also involved. Scientific and mathematical findings are subject to pure thinking and analytical study, and can be verified over time; thus, they have the innate ability to transcend many human boundaries and, thereby, promote cultural advancement and enrichment. Transcending boundaries means the world is a sphere no matter when or where a person lives, the language they speak or if they are saved or unsaved. The basic truths of calculus, chemistry, biology, and physics are irrefutable, benefiting the entire world. Thus, all civilized human cultures have been enriched by the discovery of Young's modulus, even though we may not know of it.<sup>80</sup> The truth derived from God's book of nature has a binding influence upon humanity because of that truth's worth and unchanging nature. For centuries, the truth from God's book of nature has spanned the gap between cultures, nations, religions ... enabling humans in the Age of Grace to make incredible advancements.

The book of nature has countless unread pages, hidden truth awaiting discovery. Study and discovery of the natural world have never been discouraged by God (Prov. 25:2), even though some use it for the wrong purposes. Through humanity's search of nature came:

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<sup>80</sup> Young's modulus is named after the 18th century physicist and physician Thomas Young. Young's modulus is also called the elastic modulus, and describes the elastic properties of a solid undergoing tension or compression. This modulus is very important in engineering and science today, and is the basis for bridge, skyscraper, structural, and mechanical designs.

- metallurgy (brass, bronze, iron, steel) for tools, weapons, and implements;
- glass for containers, building materials, and scientific equipment (telescopes and microscopes);
- chemistry for industry and almost every aspect our lives;
- biology for understanding germs, medicine, and nutrition;
- domestication of animals for reliable and better food sources; and
- agricultural advances to provide storable grains and reliable, abundant crops.

Many of these advances started before our Age; however, during our Age, more and more of the world became involved in using and/or making discoveries and advances. This all led to societies that had time to do something other than to be consumed with the constant struggle just to survive. And did they do something! Our Age was the catalyst for discovery and advancement, and provided the needed time for discovery and worldwide proclamation of spiritual truth. Thus, the discoveries in nature's book have enabled the other book, the written Word of God, to be spread around the world and believed.

All these discoveries led to building advanced civilizations, improving the quality of life, enabling advanced governments to develop, providing civil defense.... People's life span increased, and they were able to have more children, and children who lived. Discovery and the advancement of human culture, and perhaps climate warming, meant that it would be possible to live in more remote areas, that is, more northern and southern latitudes as appropriate shelter and reliable food sources became available. Free time and freedom of thought allowed for societies to build institutions that would lead to yet further advances. Satan cannot altogether stop discovery of facts; thus, the advances in science, medicine, agriculture, literature, industry, and so forth, continue to go on, which not only advances society but helps believers spread the gospel. In essence, God has used secularists to promote His cause. Ouch! Unbelievers become the pawns, making discoveries and advances that end up doing God's work, and Satan cannot stop this progress.

As we study the AOG, we see that scientific discoveries did not lead to unbelief. If anyone suffered for making discoveries, it was generally God-fearing Christians. It was Christians who were castigated for making the discoveries, and they often suffered at the hands of other Christians. It was the believing Galileo, who was put under arrest by a Christian church for promoting a sun-centered solar system. In spite of his supposed heresy, did Christianity suffer from it? No, it did not. People are not turned away from true faith by scientific advancements. If anything, unbelievers are drawn to the truth as the hand and mind of the Creator are revealed. If you believe God created the universe, then discovery of what He did and how He did it cannot harm Christianity, only draw others to it. However, we may get unnerved when a new discovery challenges our cherished beliefs.

The inspiration of Scripture has not been denied by true scientific discovery. However, inspiration has been undermined by incorrect interpretations of the Bible and the restraints imposed upon believers as to what they must believe in order to be "true" Christians. Oftentimes, our interpretations of Scripture become elevated in our own minds and mistakenly treated as though they were the Word itself. When these interpretations are challenged by legitimate scientific findings or new thoughts, we feel the foundations of our faith are under attack and threatened. History has shown that new findings and

discoveries, once the false ones are weeded out by further evaluation and the test of time, actually do not threaten the Word, but in reality exalt the Lord. Thus, the growth in Christianity was nurtured by those Christians who saw the need to move away from humanly imposed restraints on what a Christian must believe (with regard to the natural world), and how one must interpret the Bible. In the final analysis, the advancements in understanding and interpretation have resulted in widespread acceptance of the Word in our Age.

Christians often wonder why there is a constant battle between science and the Bible, but we also have to question if there really is a need for such a battle. The battle is about truth; if history has taught us anything, it has taught us that our interpretations of the Bible often have to be corrected. The truth in the secular world can come from the book of nature, but such truth can only confirm the written Word, as anything that is true will do. Christians have often had to give in and acquiesce, not because science was always right, but because they were wrong.

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*God has used secularists to promote His cause. Ouch! Unbelievers become the pawns, making discoveries and advances that end up doing God's work, and Satan cannot stop this progress.*

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Scientific findings and discoveries range from being absolutely correct to outright fraud. Such problems exist in all aspects of life. However, fraud and mistakes will be recognized in time, because science is self-correcting. As an example, in 1989, scientists claimed they had experimentally produced results that supported cold fusion.<sup>81</sup> Their findings were greeted with great interest, but soon proven to be false. This error reveals the beauty of science, that is, the inherent ability to identify wrong findings. Science is especially adept at finding its own errors through the scientific method. Robert Hazen, Professor of Earth Science at George Mason University and senior scientist at the Carnegie Institution's Geophysical Laboratory, very adroitly noted, "... research has seen many competing, sometimes diametrically opposed ideas, but the scientific method is a great winnower of the untenable and the false."<sup>82</sup> So, if scientists make mistakes, their errors will be exposed with continued study. The good thing is that God has built His truth into the book of nature, so continued study over long periods will reveal that truth. Thus, there is no reason to suspect science in general, for it will lead to the truth the Creator has placed into the creation.

The fear of a giant scientific conspiracy to undermine Scripture is unfounded. The various independent scientific disciplines, agencies, nations, and research venues around the world provide a reality check on each other and on new discoveries. The evidence indicates that instead of a conspiracy to promote false ideas, there is a desire to expose the errors of others; this ensures the truth is revealed eventually. Some scientists have an anti-God agenda and make bold, untrue statements. However, in time and with further study, such scientists will be proven wrong, and they will suffer disgrace. You can be sure there is nothing that many scientists would rather do than to disprove the findings of someone else. Doing so enhances a person's career and an agency's visibility, standing, and prestige. Exposing errors and debunking false theories lie at the core of scientific inquiry. Findings have to be reliable because they will be tried and examined in an effort to make certain the truth emerges.

<sup>81</sup> Cold fusion is a type of nuclear reaction that would occur at, or near, room temperature.

<sup>82</sup> Hazen, Robert M.; *The Story of Earth*; Penguin Books; New York, NY; 2012.

The same occurs in the spiritual realm, as incorrect interpretations of Scripture are eventually recognized and new understandings come to light. The view of an earth-centered universe was corrected over time, but there was no reason then, or now, to abandon faith in God because of such an error. The Reformation resulted in new discoveries in the Word, and that continued as later theologians recognized the mystery, Rapture, Judgment Seat of Christ.... Both science and Scripture compel correctness of interpretations and findings, and both result in advancement of our understanding of God and human culture.

Cultural advancement and scientific discoveries expand our thinking; causing us to see God in a much larger framework, and leading to a more correct understanding of the Bible. Christianity would be in shambles today if we still followed the former beliefs and did not recognize new discoveries and advancements. We have to wonder, what flat-earth concepts of the Bible we still hold today, while thinking we are standing strong for the Lord. A small universe and tightly restricted beliefs about what God has done result in a small concept of God. Hopefully, the ideas presented here will help develop a larger impression of God; if so, a step has been made in helping us better understand the Word.

## CHAPTER NINE

# THE Number Revealed

### Review

*The Mystery* is the body of truth defining God's actions and provisions in the Age of Grace (AOG). In addition to a body of truth, the mystery extended time, meaning more time was inserted into human history than previously indicated in God's plan. That extension of time is the Age of Grace, which is now over two thousand years long; this extension in time has allowed the truth of the mystery to be fruitful and provide accomplishments never before envisioned.

*The reason why* Satan and the rulers of this world would not have crucified Christ, had they known the mystery, is that they would have realized what God planned to accomplish in our Age. If they had this knowledge, they would not have proceeded with the crucifixion; thus, the crisis of the Cross. The depths of the accomplishments of His death are seen in the teachings of the mystery, and the results of those teachings are the very reasons why Satan and the rulers of this world would not have crucified Christ, had they known of them before the crucifixion. Here are some of the major impacts of His death as a result of the mystery and the new Age of Grace:

1. *Expansion of time:* The new Age resulted in an expansion in the amount of time God allowed for humans to live on the earth—life as we know it. This expansion of time was never alluded to, in any way, in the past. According to prophecy and the words of Peter in Acts 2, the last days already started in 33 AD. Thus, the Lord Jesus Christ should have returned in the first century, and the Kingdom would have ended around 1041 AD. However, God mercifully interrupted those last days by inserting a whole new Age, an Age no one had an inkling was in God's mind. The introduction of the new Age expanded time, allowing for the impacts of Christ's death to take effect, and resulting in a tremendous increase in the number of believers. In the Age of Grace, the number of new believers is many times that seen under the Law, all the result of God's secret that enables the full accomplishments of His death to be realized. In Chapter 6, an estimate was made showing some *772 people are being saved today* (2000-2025 AD) compared to each person saved under the Law. This is an astounding statistic, something God had to ensure Satan did not know ahead of time. That is just the beginning of Salvation's story, as we will see. Satan was doing pretty well under the Law, but had he known how many would be saved in the AOG, he may have rethought his involvement in the crucifixion.
2. *Gentile Salvation:* God had promised to bless the Gentiles through the nation of Israel in two ways. First through the singular Seed, Christ, Who would come through the genealogy of Abraham (Gal. 3:14, 16); second through the multiplied seed of Abraham, the genealogical descendents of Abraham and Isaac. The second promise would occur when Israel comes to faith

and becomes the nation of Kings and Priests (Ex. 19:6; Gal. 3:8). Getting the message of the Seed to the nations would be primarily the mission of the multiplied seed. Thus, Israel is often called the channel of blessing because it was through them the blessings of Christ would flow to the nations. The commonly called Great Commission was given to the Jewish disciples and confirms their mission: " *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit* " (Matt. 28:19). This Commission was initiated, but it could not proceed as planned because the nation of Israel did not convert and had to be set aside (Rom. 11).

What Satan did not know, is the Age of Grace not only allotted more time to history, but it also introduced a *new way for Salvation and blessings to flow to the Gentiles*, in spite of Israel's failure. God knew Israel would fail; any nation or group of people would have done the same. So God demonstrated an eternal truth, that is, Salvation and blessing must come from Him alone; dependence upon humans can only end in failure. The new Age resulted in a major change in the means of Salvation; it is based today upon God's grace and our faith in Christ (no works or acts of obedience are required). The increased number of people who would be saved was not recognized by Satan, who had in mind the number of people saved under the Law. During the Law period, the number saved was in the millions, while during the Age of Grace it is in the billions and in one-third the time. Even more astounding is the number that will likely be saved in the next century alone, potentially in the neighborhood of *1.6 billion*.

3. *Carry-over effect*: According to Scripture, one age builds upon another, so the impacts of our Age will be felt in the future, during the Millennial Kingdom. During the Kingdom, people may recall how much was accomplished in our Age as Jews and Gentiles worked together, even though the Jews generally were rejected in some way. The Jews will be the priests to the world at that time; as such, they will be accepted and have the respect of the nations. Satan will be bound during the Kingdom, Christ will be on the earth, and the Jews will proclaim the truth of the Messiah. As a result, Christ will be readily accepted and the number saved will skyrocket.
4. *Truths of our Age*: The spiritual blessings we have today, by being in Christ, are a witness to the angels in Heaven. The spiritual blessings in our Age were previously unheard, and those blessings certainly have caused Satan great anguish. In addition, things like the restraining influence on evil by the Spirit working through the Body of Christ, the promise of a Rapture, and the Judgment Seat of Christ (actually a rewards seat and a place where we are praised) are testimonies to the angels, and are part of the ultimate humiliation of Satan. The fact that redemption by Christ includes forgiving the sins and justifying believers in all past and future ages, is likely something Satan did not fully realize. Had Satan any clue of these things, his decision would have been altered; therefore, God needed him to be ignorant of the mystery in order for the crucifixion to occur as God planned.
5. *Freedom and liberty*: We have personal liberty and freedom in Christ. These factors encourage us, and enable us to do much more than we could under the Law. Free people, with liberty to express themselves, developed governmental states that encouraged discovery and cultural advancement. Discovery and advancement allowed the world's population to explode, and with that explosion there was a more than proportional increase in the number of Christians. The number of people saved during the entire AOG, through the year 2025, has the potential to be nearly *two billion*, compared to only *87 million* in all the time before Christ, which was three times as long.

The discussions in this book have considered the eternal perspective and the universal view. The consideration of time is important for seeing how the mystery fits into God's plan, and the broad perspective helps us see, beyond our normal parochial view, some of what God had to do to make that plan a reality. Gaining perspective on the time and scope of God's actions creates within the believer a sense of awe; hopefully, the unbeliever is drawn along by the logic, the incredible preparations, and the wisdom of God. The overall view enables us to see God in ways not considered before, and, as is the case with all truth about Him, we gain appreciative eyes. The following seven points are offered as a concise way to see and learn what God has done for us in the Age of Grace, so that we can be in Christ.

1. **The Plan:** God developed a plan before the world began.
2. **The Place:** God created a place for the plan to take effect.
3. **The Secret:** God ensured the plan's enactment by keeping part of it a secret.
4. **The Success:** God guided history to make sure the plan would be a complete success. Success required the main event in all of human history take place as planned.
5. **The Enactment:** God enacted the principles of the mystery by revealing them at the proper time and by dispensing His wisdom.
6. **The Time:** God created extra time, the AOG, so the plan could have the desired impact.
7. **The Future:** God will use the mystery to have a carry-over effect, influencing the future.

In First Corinthians 2:9, the Apostle Paul quoted Isaiah: *"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love him."* This passage was true for Isaiah (14:12-14), but not us. Everything God wanted us to know concerning our Age was revealed to the Apostle Paul in the first century. Paul's whole point in using this passage was to tell us that God does reveal needed truth at the right time. The information Isaiah lacked in the Old Testament was provided later by Jesus Christ. Jesus revealed Himself by sight, sound, and heart to those living in His day. Those people literally got to see, hear, and have their hearts touched by the Holy One. Isaiah was talking about the afterlife, and that was revealed by Christ during His life on earth. Later, in the same century, the mystery, which was unknown to everyone, was revealed to Paul. The mystery clearly teaches what God has prepared for the believer living in the Age of Grace. We cannot correctly use this passage to say we cannot know what God has prepared for us; instead, we have to study to find out what He has already told us.

When Paul uses the words of Isaiah, he is expressing the fact that just as Isaiah was not informed of some things, so, too, there was no information about the mystery up to the time of Paul. But that was revealed to Paul in full, completed form. We are no longer ignorant and can say (figuratively and/or literally):

- Our eyes have seen: the results of Israel's rejection, the completed Word, and the mystery written in plain language for our eyes to behold (Eph 1:18).
- Our ears have heard: God's plan for the Age of Grace, of Christ's life, the gospel of Salvation, the proof of the resurrection, the blessing of having glorified bodies when resurrected....

- Our hearts have been enlightened by: the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives, the Lord's transformation process in our lives, and all the blessing we enjoy in the fullness of times (Eph. 1:10).

Our eyes, ears, and heart have been touched by the way each of these senses operates. The things God has prepared and given to us touch every area of our lives; the only thing restricting our minds is our own need to study and correctly interpret the Word (2 Tim. 2:15).

### **One Moment in Time**

Suppose you had an experience similar to Daniel (Dan. 7:1, 9:21), in which you had a dream while asleep at night. In your dream, you saw something like a giant video screen; on the screen there appeared to be two balls floating in outer space. You could tell the balls were moving, but you could not tell their size because they were so far away. One had a lively, vibrant color, much like the earth when seen in space, and the other had a dead, drab appearance. The objects on the screen kept enlarging, as though you were in a spaceship flying toward them. As the view got closer, you became aware these were not typical balls, but huge spheres. The spheres were spinning and moving in every direction. The spheres appeared to be solid on the outside, which was all you could see. You watched and watched, and as the view got closer, you could see each sphere was even larger than you had thought; they were incredible in size. You wondered what these spheres were and what they meant. The odd thing was the two spheres never came close to each other. They moved in every direction, sometimes very rapidly, and went all over the place, but they always seemed to repel each other. The spheres were like two giant worlds carefully avoiding each other, never even coming close to each other.

After observing this behavior for a long time, you noticed something in the lower right corner of the screen. It was similar to a digital clock, with numbers on it. Upon a more detailed look, you could see the numbers showed the year, month, day, and hour of the events on the screen. Next to the clock, were buttons to use to go back or forward in time. In your dream, you pushed the rewind button and noticed the spheres started going back in time, showing where they had been historically. The buttons not only allowed you to rewind and go forward in time, but to do so quickly or slowly, even to freeze the frame. You could watch the spheres on the giant screen at any time in history.

At first, watching the spheres was fun, but soon lost your interest. You began to rewind events at a faster speed. Centuries quickly flew by, but the spheres always seemed to behave the same way. The rewinding continued for a long time, at high speed, but to your surprise, you noticed at one point in history the spheres actually begin to move toward each other, slowly but surely. You slowed the rewind so you could observe this strange behavior. From all you had observed, this behavior was odd, very odd. Not only did the spheres move toward each other, but they seemed to be on a collision course. The fact they had always repelled each other, like similar magnetic poles, made you think they would soon dart in opposite directions. But no, they kept getting closer. What would happen if they touched? Could they touch? You excitedly watched as something unique was in progress, but just when the two spheres looked like they would touch, there was a flash of darkness and you could not see anything. After the flash, the spheres rebounded quickly, very quickly. You were frustrated in your dream by the fact that the very instant the spheres may have touched, the screen went black. At the most interesting and intriguing part of the dream, you were left hanging. At this point, you woke up. Once you were awake, you could vividly recall every detail, but had no clue what the dream meant.



After waking, you were perplexed; sure, the dream was crazy, they all are, but this one was somehow different. The more you thought of it, the more you came to believe this was not a crazy dream at all, but one of divine significance. But, what did it mean? Why would the Lord give you a dream and then deny you the meaning? Nights later, while you were asleep, the Archangel Gabriel came to you. Gabriel asked if you knew what the dream meant; thankfully, in your dream, you had enough sense to say, "No, but you do" (or, kiddingly, in a dream would you say, "No, but thou dost"?). Gabriel explained that he was sent by God to help you understand what the dream meant. Wow, that is more than a person might expect.

Gabriel said the lively-colored sphere was the "God sphere," and represented God's concerns throughout history, that is, things pertaining to His plans and purposes. He explained the spheres were solid on the outside but filled with gas inside. Each molecule of gas inside the God sphere represented a specific interest of God, an interest He always made sure took place according to His plan. The dead, drab appearing sphere was the "Satan sphere," and each molecule of gas inside it represented one of his concerns, schemes, or anti-God actions. These spheres were huge because God and Satan had many concerns in this world. Gabriel explained that the spheres repelled each other because God's concerns and Satan's concerns were always at odds, mutually repellent. Then he explained the clock, and how it could be used to see all past history, but you already knew this. What you did not know, until Gabriel explained it to you, is that you could also zoom in and out to see the big picture or fine details.

You were thrilled with what Gabriel told you, but he did not mention that one brief time when the spheres looked like they were going to touch. Finally, you asked, "Why, at one time, did the two spheres come closer and closer; did they actually touch?" Gabriel smiled, but beneath the smile was a troubled, somber look. He seemed to know you would ask this very question. He went on to explain, "When the spheres were coming closer and closer, that meant at some time in the past God and Satan were thinking somewhat the same." "As the spheres got closer, God and Satan were agreeing more and more." "How could this be; how could God's and Satan's concerns ever be close to agreement," you blurted out. Then Gabriel reminded you of the ability to go back to this event and observe it in slow motion or stop time wherever you wanted, so you could see every detail.

"Before we look at this event," said Gabriel, "You should know each location on the outside of the sphere represents a specific date and time." Gabriel explained that when any two spheres with a hard shell touch, they can only touch at one point. He further explained the significance of touching at only one point, "If they did touch, that touch-point would represent one specific moment in time." This information seemed of minor concern to you. You asked Gabriel to push the button and go back to the time when the spheres were close to touching. You explained to him that you wanted to know what happened at that one particular time in history. You further noted, you wanted to know if the spheres actually did touch, and the meaning of the black flash. A bit reluctantly, Gabriel asked if you really wanted to know the truth, or if you were just curious. You assured him that you felt this whole matter was of divine origin, so God must want you to know. Gabriel made a feeble attempt to smile.

He pushed the rewind button and time started going backward from the 21st century, at which time the two spheres were far apart. Just for the fun of it, he stopped the clock at the time of the Reformation. You noticed the spheres were extra far apart, and assumed there must not have been much agreement at that time. Gabriel stopped at some other critical points in history, and the spheres were always far apart. This was taking a long time, so you asked him to speed things up; soon, centuries were flying by in seconds. All of a sudden, the black flash was seen, but by the time the rewind stopped, it was 20 AD. So, sometime after 20 AD (more recent in time) the black flash occurred; you asked Gabriel to go slowly forward in time and stop exactly when the spheres may have touched. You notice a definite change in his demeanor, perhaps even a tear through his attempted smile.

The clock began to move forward in time, recounting the years from 20 AD. Year after year went by, 21, 22, 23 ... the spheres were moving closer and closer, then, Bam! All of a sudden the black flash occurred. Gabriel stopped the clock as quickly as possible—just after the black flash—then proceeded to go back in slow motion, so you could see everything. By the manner in which he ran the rewind button, you could tell he already knew the exact time when the flash occurred. As time approached the black flash, the spheres kept getting closer and closer. He started going back in super slow motion so you could see everything in detail. Your heart was racing; you knew Gabriel would stop the clock at the exact frame that revealed what you wanted to see. The suspense was overwhelming as you watched spellbound.

He stopped the clock right at the time of the black flash. Of course you could not see anything; it was all dark. You turned to Gabriel and noticed he was in tears. "Why do you cry," you asked. "Come see," said Gabriel. "But, I can't see anything," you exclaimed. Gabriel was so heart-broken he could no longer speak, but did manage to point to the clock. You noticed that even though the spheres were not to be seen because the screen was dark, the clock was still visible. At that very moment, Gabriel disappeared. "What in the world, now what?" you wondered. At this most critical time, you were left alone, in the lurch, with a dark screen in front of you. However, you could see the clock, so you had better read it, as Gabriel said. You did. You saw the year, the month, the day, and the hour. Those numbers were interesting—no doubt of great significance—but what did they mean?

Then, at that very moment, as though inspired by God, Gabriel's seemingly unimportant comment about the touch-point came to mind. Maybe that point on the spheres, representing time and date, could help you understand. You moved the clock forward just a little and stopped the clock; the black screen had disappeared. Although the frame was frozen in time, you could tell the spheres had already rebounded and were dashing apart, probably faster than they had ever moved before. You noticed on the God sphere, at the exact spot the spheres touched, there was a little red mark resulting from the collision. Could a better view of this mark help you understand this whole incident? The only way to know was to zoom in and see. You manipulated the buttons and started to zoom in on this exact spot. It took some time to zoom close enough, but when you did get close, you could see the red mark contained numbers, but what numbers? "Oh, yeah, the numbers representing the time the two spheres touched," you thought. The view got closer and the focus became crystal clear. Yes, the numbers in red were the same as on the clock, the same exact date and time.

All of a sudden, in an instant, you realized what you were seeing. You needed no more—you knew! You finally understood why there was a black flash. You realized, without being told, the spheres did touch, and it was the touching that caused the black flash. No one needed to explain any more to you. Now you realized why Gabriel was so full of sorrow just before he left. Mostly, you realized what the numbers represented.

Upon waking, the dream was clear to you, and the truth was life-changing. You wondered if your mind could handle what you had just seen; a human mind can only take so much. You finally knew the truth, and it was overwhelming. Your mind was racing, and you were dripping with sweat. At last, you knew what the dream meant, and the reality began to weigh heavily upon our heart. Now you shared the same tears that Gabriel did, because you understood the meaning of the dream. You knew the two spheres actually did touch at one time in history; at that exact time, *God and Satan were in agreement*. You realized how it was possible for this to be true, and you knew the exact time when the spheres touched. You also knew that when played back in real time, the black flash was *three hours long*. You did not have

to record the numbers; they would be seared forever into your mind. In fact, if anyone ever were to see those numbers, that person will never forget, no matter how long he or she lives.

What is so significant about a number that no one will ever forget it? Most of us remember some numbers like our birthday, anniversaries, the number of the beast, or references like John 3:16. Some dates are embedded in our minds, like the American Declaration of Independence on July 4th, 1776, the Reformation in 1517, or perhaps even the battle of Hastings in 1066.

Perhaps the reader is thinking, "I did not know there was some special number, and I still do not know what the number is." Do not feel alone, few come to this point in their understanding. However, the number in this dream is not just a number. It is *THE Number*: THE Number that represents the year, the month, the day, the hour of the most important event in human history. However, if THE Number were so important, why is it so unknown? How could it represent the most important event in all human history and be such a secret? The plain truth is, you know very well the event with which the number is associated; you just do not know the number.

**THE Number on the clock was 33433.**

Wait, who ever heard of 33433? You may think it cannot be that important if no one knows of it. The point is this: even if we do not remember this exact number, we all should know this number refers to something monumental. Again, this number is THE Number of the most significant event in human history, for it represents the year, the month, the day, and the hour.

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*The number 33433, is the exact date and time when the Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross, that is, the year 33 AD, the month of April (4), the 3rd day, and the time was 3 PM. <sup>68</sup>*

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Jesus died on the Passover, which according to the Jewish calendar was on the 15th of Nisan—our April 3-4 (the 3rd is considered the most likely). Thus, in the year 33 AD, in the fourth (4) month, the third (3) day, at three (3) PM (the 9th hour), Jesus' physical life ended. Thus, the number 33433. The red mark on the God sphere, the spot where the two spheres touched, recorded the date in His blood. In the grand scheme of events, for all time, in the entire universe, this number (date) is the most crucial: 33433. THE Number records, in memorable form, the time of His death. We remember His birthday, but this is His *deathday*; the most important date and event in all of human history took place on 33433.

<sup>68</sup> The traditional Jewish Passover was on the 15th of Nisan (Ex. 12:6), and Christ died on the Passover. The most probable date for His death is Nisan 15, 33 AD, which is our April 3, 33 AD. The Hebrew day began at sunrise, 6 AM, so their days and our days do not exactly match. This date and time are based upon our present-day Gregorian calendar. This number will not agree with the Hebrew calendar, which would show the year as 3793 (dated from creation), the month of Nisan (their first month), on the 15 day, in the 9th hour. The issue here is not to state categorically that this is the exact date of His death, or to enter into that argument. Instead, the issue is to establish the fact that the clock in the dream records His death exactly (whatever that exact date may be). The hour would be based upon today's time reckoning, Jerusalem Standard Time. Similarly, the Resurrection would be 33456 (fourth month, fifth day, and sixth hour AM).



**Picture 9.1**, on the God sphere the number 33433 is just becoming visible.

The world celebrates Jesus' birthday on December 25th; this is a date people remember. Although we celebrate His birth on Christmas, we recognize there is considerable evidence His actual birthday was not in December. Similarly, we acknowledge His death on Good Friday, a date which varies each year, yet we accept this variation knowing the real issue is the fact He did die. We also remember His death when we partake in Communion, a God-given way of remembering His death. The dating schemes we use today are different from those in the past, so actual dates for the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ are not easily pinpointed. Scholars cannot, with certainty, go back two thousand years to establish the year Christ was born. We can see the difficulty in setting the date for His death according to our dating system. While the Bible informs us, via the Passover, of the month and day of His death, the complete date depends upon the year, which is not certain. The Bible clearly and specifically mentions the hour of His death. We recognize the exact date of His death is not as important as the fact He did die, and why that was necessary. Using reliable biblical and scholarly evidence, THE Number, 33433, represents to the best of our understanding the exact time of His death, indelibly stamped into history, on that special day.

We humans can play all sorts of religious games with numbers, so much so that the game becomes our focus, not what is being taught. For example, the symmetry of this number can be said to reveal God's design: the threes show divine perfection specifically related to the Trinity, and the four indicates the first thing after the revelation of the Trinity, namely His creative works .... Such games could go on and on with this number, but "fun with numbers" subverts true spiritual understanding of the event. The purpose for finally finding THE Number in the dream is to have the dream reveal something of special and eternal significance. Also, it allows us to recognize His deathday as much as His birthday.

What we have to remember, as we analyze what happened at the time of Christ's death, is that God and Satan were in absolute agreement on one thing: *Christ had to die*. This was the one moment in time the spheres touched and why 33433 is so important in the dream. God and Satan agreed on this historical event, but their reasons for agreeing were in total opposition. God pursued the death of Christ for holiness, justice, and righteousness, while Satan pursued it out of a desire to kill Christ and to promote the lie that Christ was an imposter. Christ was there out of love for us; the world rulers were mere dupes. Satan was

there out of hatred and spite. The touching spheres portray a physical event. If they were spiritual spheres, they would have been as far apart as possible because deep inside, spiritually, God and Satan were not of the same mind at all; they had very different motives and intentions as the time of the Cross approached.

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*As the crucifixion approached, God and Satan agreed that Christ had to die. God and Christ were there out of love for us; Satan was there out of his rancid love of self.*

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### Satan's View of the Future

What Satan did not know, as the crucifixion approached, was that God had a secret. What Satan did know was his own devious plan, which was as self-serving and despicable as possible. He was going along with God's plan for the crucifixion, planning to partake in the rejection of the Holy Spirit later, and conniving for Israel's future spiritual fall. Based upon what he knew and what God had revealed up to that time, Satan envisioned the last days beginning back in the first century. Satan saw that Christ had only a small flock of believers, and that his plan would result in few Jews being saved. In addition, he most likely did not know that he would be bound during the Kingdom, which was revealed later in Scripture. So, He envisioned that Salvation, both for Jews and Gentiles, would be held to the fewest number possible prior to and during the Kingdom.

If there were no Age of Grace, the last days and the earthly Kingdom would have begun in the first century AD, with God's plan in disarray, and with the heavenly hosts wondering if something were wrong with God's plan. Satan knew full well he ultimately would be cast into the Lake of Fire after the Kingdom, but from what was known at the time, he would have caused great damage to God's plan of redemption. So much so, that he would have done much more than bruised Christ's heel; in fact, he may have appeared as the ultimate victor in the battle of the ages. Is it possible, in his twisted mind, that he thought he could convince the world that God was being vindictive and unjust in punishing him, the god of this world?

Satan envisioned the Kingdom starting in the first century, approximately 41 AD, shortly after the death of Christ. What he envisioned was completely in accordance with all that had been revealed by God. Indeed, Christ taught that He would be with the believers for a little while (John 13:33, 14:19, 16:16) and then go to the Father. After leaving this world, He would send the Holy Spirit (Helper, in John 14:23-26). He clearly was teaching that soon after His ascension, the believers would see Him again in the form of the Holy Spirit, since all three members of the Godhead are one. In the first century Christ said He would soon leave but send the Helper. When He left, it was *to prepare* a place for them, and the implication was that this would all happen in a relatively short period of time. Incidentally, He did leave to prepare a place for them; the preparation took place in Heaven, but that place would come back with Him to the earth.

The Scripture indicates only one thing is said to *be prepared* by Him. The thing prepared was not a dwelling place for them in Heaven; instead, it was a place prepared in Heaven that would come to earth. The *New Jerusalem* is the only thing specifically said to *have been prepared by Him*, as a bride is prepared for her husband, *and it comes to earth* (Rev. 3:12, 21:2, 9-10). Christ was most probably

referring to the New Jerusalem when He said He would prepare a place for believers, then He would bring it to earth. However, there is some controversy over when the Jew Jerusalem comes to the earth.<sup>68</sup> We will ignore the issue of when it comes and concentrate on the rest of Christ's teaching. With confidence, we can say that Christ said He would leave for some period of time to prepare a place for believers, but the next thing on the agenda was His return. Christ gave no indication of the time involved in His absence, just that He would leave shortly and send the Spirit soon thereafter. God had to keep the time involved hidden, so that Satan would continue to believe the next things on God's time clock were the Tribulation and Day of the Lord. All the believers knew was that He had promised to come back soon.

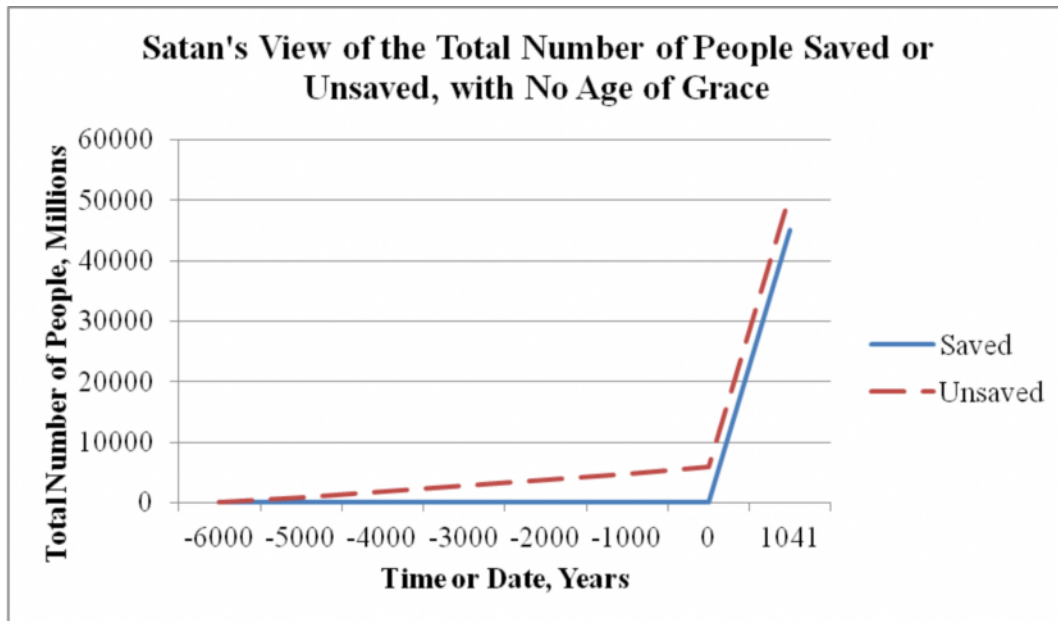
Several examples will suffice to make the point that in the first century the Age of Grace was totally unknown; thus, the Tribulation and Day of the Lord were the next things to occur shortly after Christ's crucifixion.

1. In John 16:17b, Christ said, *"A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me."* He was telling the disciples that in a short time He would leave them, to go to Heaven to prepare a place for them. However, He would not leave them without Divine comfort; indeed, He would send the Helper to them (Jn. 16:7). Then He made a veiled reference to the Tribulation in John 16:20. However, the next verse is not veiled, *"A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world"* (Jn. 16:21). Believers would recognize His words as a reference to Isaiah 13:8. Both passages discuss the sorrow experienced by a woman in labor until she gives birth, after which she no longer remembers her anguish. The woman in birth pains is Israel, as her people are being born again during the Tribulation. The context of Isaiah 13, both the verses before and after, supports the fact that the Tribulation and Day of the Lord were in view. Jesus said He would depart to prepare a place, send the Holy Spirit, and explained the next events on God's clock. Those very next events were clearly end-time events. There is no indication of an extension in time, due to the AOG.
2. On the Day of Pentecost, first century, Peter said the events they were experiencing were in direct fulfillment of Scripture, and they were entering the last days, at that very time (Acts 2:14-20). The Bible never even suggests Peter was wrong; he was absolutely correct and the last days were upon them in the first century.
3. In Matthew 24, Jesus Christ was asked about the end of the age; the age under consideration was the age in which the disciples lived, the Law Age. He answered the question by referring to the Tribulation and Day of the Lord, which were the next events on the timeline, as known at that time.
4. In Daniel 9:27-27, Daniel indicates that after the Messiah's death, the next big event was the Tribulation. Daniel's prophecy skips over two thousand years of human history.

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<sup>68</sup> Most Christians believe the New Jerusalem (NJ) will come to earth after the earthly Kingdom; but, it may come down at the start of the Kingdom. So, there are two views of the NJ: 1) it comes to earth as part of the Kingdom, or 2) it comes to earth in the eternal state after the Kingdom. Both views are based upon honest efforts to interpret difficult passages of Scripture. Both views have strengths and weaknesses. The obvious lack of chronological order in Revelation is one reason the passages are hard to interpret.

Satan knew the Scripture taught the order of events were: the Cross, Resurrection, Ascension, Tribulation, Day of the Lord, and finally the earthly Kingdom. Since he knew of no Age of Grace, Satan had a skewed perception of possible outcomes. Figure 9.1 represents one possible scenario of the total number of people saved and unsaved throughout all of human history based upon no Age of Grace, as Satan understood future events. Figure 9.1 is based upon a rapidly growing world population in the Kingdom; however, Satan most likely saw a much slower growth, as had occurred for the previous six thousand years. If he did not know he would be bound during the Kingdom, that would have further distorted his perception. Yes, there would be people saved during the Kingdom, but Satan is a mathematic whiz and knew that this meant the relative number of people saved and unsaved throughout history would most likely be in his favor. You can see the estimates indicate the number of people saved throughout history would be less at the end of the Kingdom than those unsaved.<sup>68</sup> Figure 9.1 is one of many possible outcomes, but indicates what Satan may have had in mind. Even if the worst case scenario occurred, Satan most likely envisioned the final summary of world history would show many more people going to Hell than Heaven. This seems to be a major reason why Satan was willing to proceed with crucifying Christ, even though doing so agreed with God.



**Figure 9.1.** Satan's perception of the number of people who would be saved and unsaved throughout human history, based upon no Age of Grace. (Note: 10,000 million is ten billion people; thus, the vertical scale is in increments of ten billion people.)

In the truncated timeline envisioned by Satan, Figure 9.1, the Cross, Tribulation, and Day of the Lord occur shortly after 0 AD. For reference sake, the cumulative number of people that would be saved from creation to time zero, Christ's birth, would be around 87 million (approximately 0.1 billion), per Chapter 6. Eighty-seven million can hardly be seen; it is almost on the horizontal (abscissa) time line. The vertical scale (ordinate) contains very large numbers in order to portray the large numbers of people that will have existed throughout history; it is this large scale that makes 87 million seem small. From Satan's perspective, if the Kingdom were to start shortly after Christ's death, then the number saved through all history would be something like 45 billion by the end of the Kingdom. However, at the end of the Kingdom, the number of unsaved throughout history would be 50 billion. With final numbers like these,

<sup>68</sup> Figure 9.1 is based upon a world population of 10B during the Kingdom and half of that number being saved.

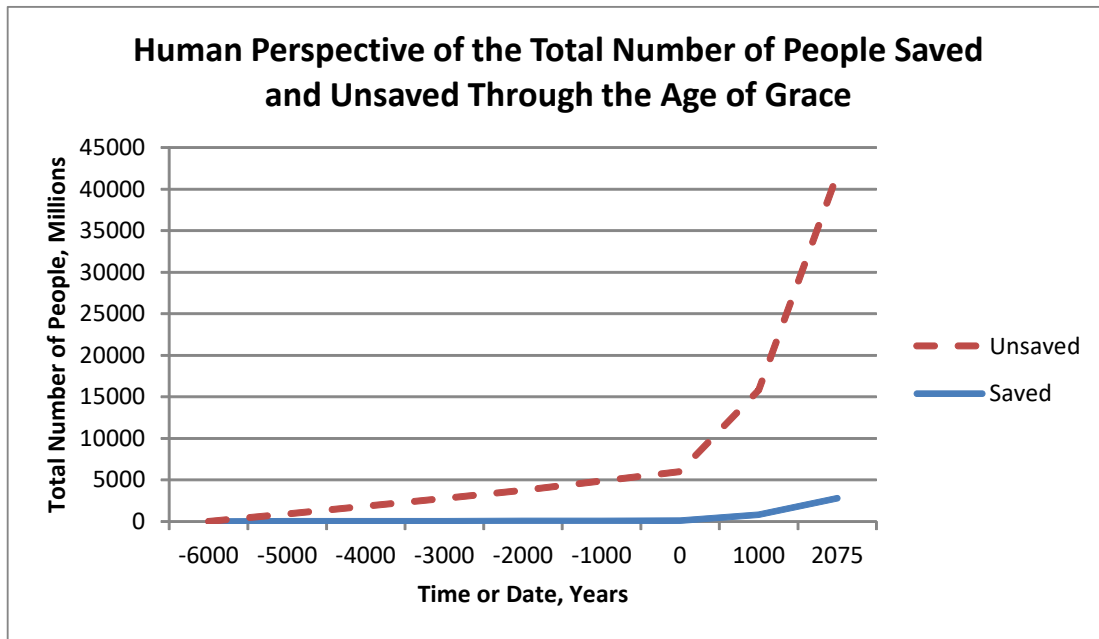
it seems Satan would have minimized the impacts of the Kingdom upon humanity, which would indicate he had caused more disruption and pain than God had anticipated.

### Human View of the Future

God knew Satan would be willing to proceed with the crucifixion, based upon what Satan knew at the time. God planned to allow the Holy Spirit to be rejected, and just as the last days began, to interrupt time and introduce a deeply held secret. This secret, after being hidden since the beginning of time, was revealed in the first century. As a reminder, since the secret required a whole new Age, the Age of Grace itself is often referred to as the secret. According to God's secret plan, Israel would not be converted at that time, *but the Gentiles would be saved* anyway. Countless more lives would be saved in God's new Age of Grace than Satan could have ever imagined. Not only would many people be saved, but they would be blessed in unheard ways, Satan would be humiliated before the heavenly hosts, and new discoveries and advances would create a world with incredible possibilities. God's new Age caused a world-wide spiritual awakening, and an expansion of time so that more and more people could come to know Christ as Savior. In the new Age, even the secular world and governments were taught how to work together, all resulting in the spread of the gospel. Yes, God's secret unveiled the Age of Grace, in which the full accomplishments of Christ's death come to fruition. In addition, the truths of the mystery carry-over into the Kingdom. In the final analysis, the events of the Cross are what will cause Satan's final crushing head blow. Had Satan known all this, his sphere would not have touched God's sphere, meaning Christ would not have been crucified. The results of an un-crucified Christ are unthinkable; every human who ever lived would be lost, condemned to Hell.

The addition of a new Age resulted in the full accomplishments of Christ's death to promote a huge growth in the number saved, from million to billions. The increase in the number saved has been discussed, and is shown in Figure 9.2. The number saved at the end of the AOG is estimated to be around 2-4 billion (for the Rapture occurring between 2020 and 2125 AD). The number unsaved at that time would be in the neighborhood of 39 billion. In Figure 9.2, the sharp rise in the number saved in the AOG is not as pronounced as one might expect from Figure 6.1. The reason for this is that the vertical scale has to accommodate all the lives of individuals who have ever lived, and this makes 2-4 billion look rather small in comparison. While the AOG has resulted in many being saved, there is a corresponding, but even larger, increase in the number of unsaved. This is because only about eight percent of the world's population are being saved today, while 92 percent are not being saved. Figure 9.2 paints a surprisingly bleak picture, not what we might expect. The great growth in the number of unsaved will continue for however long the AOG lasts. However, the Kingdom has not yet been considered.





**Figure 9.2.** The total number of human lives, saved and unsaved, at the end of AOG, that is, before the Kingdom. There will be more unsaved than saved, no matter how long the AOG lasts.

### God's Eternal Perspective

What we have studied so far may be somewhat non-traditional; nevertheless, hopefully it is profitable for the study of the Word. There is one question that has not been addressed, and that has always been of concern, perhaps hauntingly so, to many believers. Based upon traditional teaching, the testimony of Scripture, and even the numbers derived in this book, the question that begs an answer is, "If Satan leads more people to Hell than get into Heaven, isn't he the victor in the battle of the ages"? Sure, he ultimately is cast into the Lake of Fire, but dare we ask if he may have done more than God anticipated if most people have followed him?

From Figures 9.1 and 9.2, the number of unsaved individuals is always greater than those saved. The one perspective not yet considered is what will occur during the Kingdom based upon the existence of the AOG. The final number, the summation, of all the saved versus all the unsaved people throughout all the ages may be an important concern which we must consider. Thus, the numbers of people saved and unsaved, throughout all of human history have to be determined to get the true answer. We confuse the issue when we consider the answer is found in the number of people who enter the Kingdom shortly after the end of the Age of Grace, which would be found in Figure 9.2. At the start of the Kingdom, the unsaved from all the ages clearly will exceed those saved. Instead of considering the start of the Kingdom, the question can only be answered correctly when we consider the entire scope of God's plan, that is, by going to the end of all the ages. The correct perspective of God's plan would consider not only what occurs up to the time of the Kingdom, but what also happens during the Kingdom. Thus, the real question and its correct answer must not be based upon how many *get into* the Kingdom, but also *how many are saved during the Kingdom*. During the Kingdom, the number saved will amount to billions, more than we have ever anticipated.

The earthly Kingdom is the hope of all believers in all ages, except ours. It is often called the Kingdom of Heaven, not because it is in Heaven, but because a heavenly perspective and rule is established on this

earth by God. Humans do not bring in the earthly Kingdom by their faith or actions; the time of its occurrence is based entirely upon God's timing and plan. In addition to the Kingdom on earth, there is Heaven itself. Heaven is the hope and destiny of the believers of our Age. It seems one group will be in the earthly Kingdom, and another group in Heaven, at least for one-thousand years. After the earthly Kingdom is over, Satan will revolt, he will be cast into the Lake of Fire, and then the end will come. The final abode for all believers, regardless of when they lived, will be in Heaven; Christ will deliver the earthly Kingdom to Heaven. All believers ultimately will be together with Him in Heaven (1 Cor. 15:24-26). This is the eternal state.

The various theologies that support an earthly Kingdom generally do not consider what occurs during the Kingdom. Accordingly, these theologies tend to stop God's plan for humans at the beginning of the Kingdom and do not consider the important, critical events that are designed to occur throughout the Kingdom. This is a natural limitation, since most believers consider the introduction of the Kingdom, rightly or wrongly, as "the end of life" as we know it. The introduction of the earthly Kingdom will create changes we cannot envision, and God will be accomplishing a lot more with the human race. Life during the Kingdom will be much different from today, in some regards, but there will also be some aspects much like today. The Kingdom is the great, anticipated age for Israel and the nations; there is no mystery concerning this age's existence, even though we may wish we knew more.

The Kingdom is the golden age for Israel and the nations. With Satan bound, with Israel reborn as a believing nation (by way of analogy, restored to the status of a pure virgin),<sup>68</sup> and with Christ on earth, there will be an overwhelming evangelistic period. The whole earth will be filled with His glory, " *'...Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!'* " (Isa. 6:3). The gentiles from the various nations will seek the Jews, " *'...In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you'* " (Zech. 8:23). This is life as usual in the sense normal (mortal) humans on earth will need to be saved; however, it will be abnormal in the sense there will be a hunger for the Lord that we have never known. Not only a hunger, but the seekers will be fed to the full. The evangelic outreach will be unheard, according to our standards; billions will surely be saved. " *Now if their fall is the riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!* " (Rom. 11:12).

We sometimes do not get the right answers in life because we do not ask the right questions. The topic of how many people may potentially be saved during the Kingdom is a topic rarely discussed, and when it is, the wrong questions are generally asked. We will never come close to understanding this topic if we do not consider what occurs *during* the Kingdom, and that seems to be the key. To be sure, God has never said that victory is defined by the final tally of those saved versus the number lost, but we can respectfully and humbly wonder about this. Murky as our understanding may be, there are incredible things to learn as we consider the entirety of God's plan.

Many, perhaps most, Christians are accustomed to thinking the number of people who are true believers does not really matter, because in the spiritual realm faith is what is important, not numbers. This, indeed, may be true. As an example, mega-churches have many saved individuals; however, we have to admit the number saved is small compared to the number of unsaved in the rest of society. For some, the small number of attendees in some churches provides solace in the belief that a small number is a measure of faithfulness, and that is what is really important. We are accustomed to thinking small. The position of this book is that the number of people being saved in the AOG is very large compared to

<sup>68</sup> Shober, Stephen; *The Song of Solomon—A Love Story with a Hidden Message*; eBook on Amazon or from [www.grace4you.com](http://www.grace4you.com); hard copy from Grace Publications; Grand Rapids, MI; [www.gracepublications.org](http://www.gracepublications.org); 2015.

previous ages. However, in comparison to the number of people who are unsaved, it is clear more people will go to Hell than to Heaven. In Chapter 7, a query was made concerning the carry-over effect, from the AOG into the Kingdom. Will the carry-over effect be a factor that will dramatically change this scenario, resulting in more people being saved in the Kingdom than were ever before saved? Of course, the major factors leading to an increase in those saved during the Kingdom will relate to Satan being bound, and Christ being here on earth using a nation of priests to reach the world. By the end of the AOG, the number of unsaved will be much greater than those saved (see Figure 9.2), so, as a matter of curiosity, is it even possible for more people to be saved than unsaved in the final analysis, when all ages are taken into consideration? This seemingly remote possibility needs further consideration. Maybe numbers do mean something when the final count is taken.

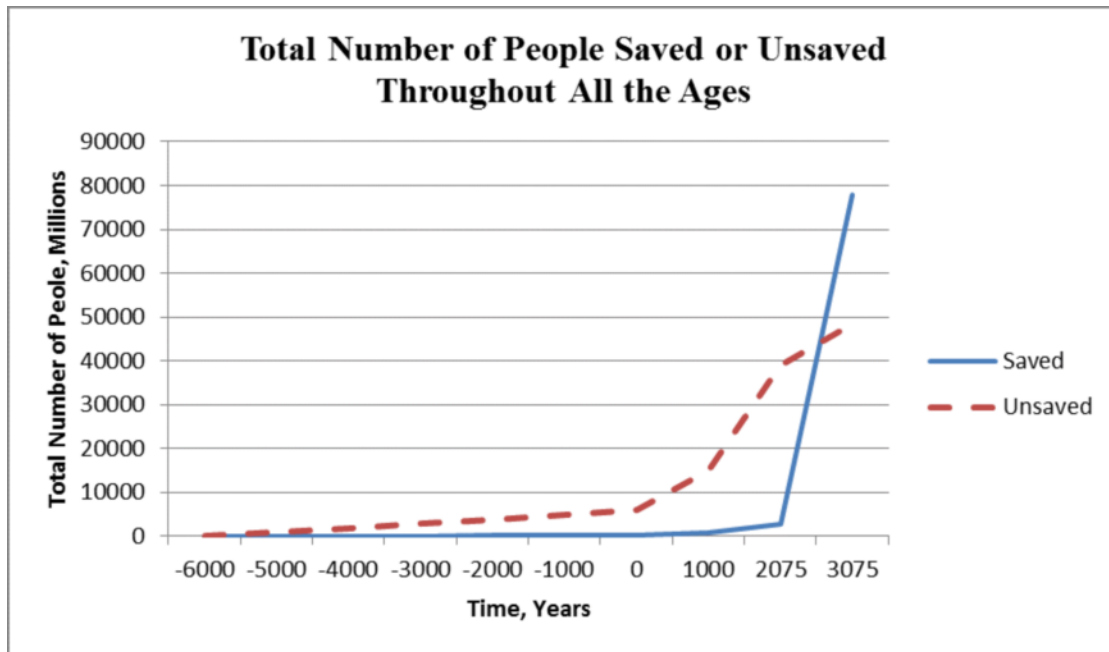
The possibility we will consider is this: in the final account, when all of history is considered, is it possible more people could be saved than unsaved? From Figure 9.2, we can see a vast disparity will exist between the two at the end of the AOG. However, the possibility we must yet consider is how many people may be saved during the Kingdom, and how that will affect the final number of all those saved versus unsaved throughout history. As we proceed, this discussion is designed to explore possibilities for the future, as we delve into rather unusual issues. We know that God has never indicated the number going to Heaven should be more or equal to those going to Hell, as though God and Satan were in a numbers game. We know the way that leads to Salvation is narrow while the path to destruction is broad; however, that is the case during the ages of the Law and Grace, not necessarily in the final analysis. Some day He will reveal this truth to us; in the meantime, we can only use our limited understanding of the future to suggest vague possibilities.

The number of people saved in all ages clearly has been in the minority. In the Age of Grace, the percentage of those saved, estimated to be 6.6-8%, has increased somewhat. At the same time, the world's population has exploded, indicating the number saved has increased incredibly. However, we must always keep in mind that around 92 percent of the world's population are unsaved. Thus, throughout history, the unsaved numbers have risen more pronouncedly than those saved. During the Kingdom, there will be a sharp contrast: Satan will be bound, Christ will be ruling on the earth, and Israel will be a nation of kings and priests. This contrast could result in an astounding number of people becoming saved.

The author considered various scenarios in order to estimate how many people might be saved during the Kingdom. The problem with such scenarios is that there are many unknown factors, and assumptions need to be made. The various scenarios considered what were thought to be reasonable assumptions, but no one really understands the Kingdom well enough to be confident in such assumptions.<sup>68</sup> For each scenario, the number of saved and unsaved were estimated for the entire time humans will have been on the earth, from creation to the end of the Kingdom. Figure 9.3 expands upon Figure 9.2 to show one scenario extending through the Kingdom. Other scenarios show very different results: some show even more saved and some show the unsaved outnumbering the saved. Out of respect for the Lord, concerning things that may be beyond our purview, each of us is advised to exercise care not to make unadvised claims based upon that information presented here. What is presented here is for illustrative purposes only. While the estimates of Figure 9.3 may be within reason, they also may be misleading since so

<sup>68</sup> Some of the considerations for the various scenarios were: 1) the number of unsaved individuals entering the Kingdom varies from 50 to 500 million, 2) the maximum population at the end of the Kingdom ranges from six to ten billion (could be higher, which would increase the number saved), 3) population growth rates vary from first to third-degree curvilinear (first degree is straight line growth), 4) the maximum population is reached in 200 to 1000 years, 5) Christ is on earth and Satan is bound, so the number of believers will likely be 40% to 90% of the world's population, and 6) an average life span of 100 years (includes unbelievers).

much is unknown for the Kingdom age. For example, today's thinking is that 10 billion is the maximum population the earth can support, but who knows? During the Kingdom the earth may support 20 or 30 billion.



**Figure 9.3.** One possible scenario for the number saved and unsaved throughout the entire span of human existence.

Now we can get a possible glimpse of the eternal perspective, and that glimpse can only cause us to be awestruck with what God is doing. Notice that all throughout recorded history, the number of unsaved has vastly outnumbered those saved. This comparison may be reversed in the Kingdom. During the Kingdom, the number saved could be so large that the final tally may show more saved than unsaved throughout the course of human existence. The notable increase in the number saved during our Age is dwarfed by what occurs in the Kingdom. However, it is our Age that prepares the way and is vitally instrumental to the success of the Kingdom age.

Figure 9.3 is conceptual in nature, making the point that more people may be saved than lost when the final tally is made. In order to develop Figure 9.3, the Rapture was assumed to occur sometime between 2025 and 2125 AD, the average of 2075 AD was used in the figure. The Kingdom would then occur, and last for one thousand years. The estimated number of people saved and unsaved for the entire course of human existence is indeed enlightening. The scenario shown indicates the final number of people who are saved could exceed greatly the number lost. The opposite is also a possibility. If the final number of those saved exceeds the number lost, this number would be amazing; however, God's plan is to be respected and treated with reverence, even if this were not the case.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>68</sup> The numbers discussed do not include individuals who died due to abortions, infant deaths, childhood tragedies, miscarriages, or failure to implant. Quite likely, the largest group of all is composed of fertilized eggs that fail to implant on the wall of the uterus. The latter group includes natural failure to implant and those caused by birth control pills. The numbers discussed do not include those with mental handicaps or with the inability to know right from wrong. Most evangelicals believe all of these individuals will be treated graciously by God, and will go to Heaven. Some other Christian churches believe such individuals are heaven-bound if they are baptized. While these individuals are not included in the various scenarios, they represent a huge number that would have a profound effect on the final numbers.

Considering all scenarios, the accumulated number of unsaved will be much greater than those saved when the Kingdom begins, that is, shortly after the end of the Age of Grace. This is a natural mathematic reality due to the high percentage of unsaved in all previous ages and in ours; however, the situation completely reverses during the Kingdom. At the end of the thousand years (see Figure 9.3), there is the distinct possibility the final tally will show more people saved than unsaved. The final numbers are known only by the Almighty, Who has the prerogative to reveal them in due time.

The numbers of saved and unsaved, in the final tally, may offer a reason to suppose the Rapture will occur before the number of unsaved becomes so large during our Age that the number cannot be surpassed during the Kingdom. There is, however, no reason to promote this supposition, merely to note it. If our main concern is the number saved, then each of us can see the ongoing need to promote evangelism, missionary efforts, and family teaching about Christ.

We can now understand why, in Chapter 6, some of the assumptions and estimates could be very poor and yet provide the estimates needed for the eternal perspective (see Figure 9.3). It does not matter if 1%, 10%, or 20% of the world's population were saved before Christ; the cumulative number saved under the Law would still be miniscule in the grand scheme. In the AOG, the number saved is large compared with the Law, and this shows the marvelous results of the mystery. However, the assumptions used to compile the estimates for the AOG could be largely inaccurate, and we would still have a reasonable idea of what occurs in our Age. Thus, our estimates of those saved at the beginning or end of the AOG could be very imprecise without biasing our understanding of God's work during the totality of human history. Similarly, using the year zero or the year 41 (approximate time for the start of the AOG) makes little difference for our purposes. What is important to note is the fact that in the AOG, God is doing things that are preparing the world for something beyond our comprehension. There can be no doubt, God's preparations for the age to come will pay off big time.

To help the reader grasp God's actions throughout history, the estimates for the various ages have been put on a yearly basis below. Thus, the average number saved each year can be easily compared, so that a person can see the increasing number of people saved as God's plan proceeds through time. The first two bullets below were shown in Chapter 6 (rounded off here); the last bullet has been added to show the Kingdom. The numbers are large, and may be hard to put in perspective; however, you easily can see the increasing trend of those saved under the Law, to the Age of Grace, and into the future.

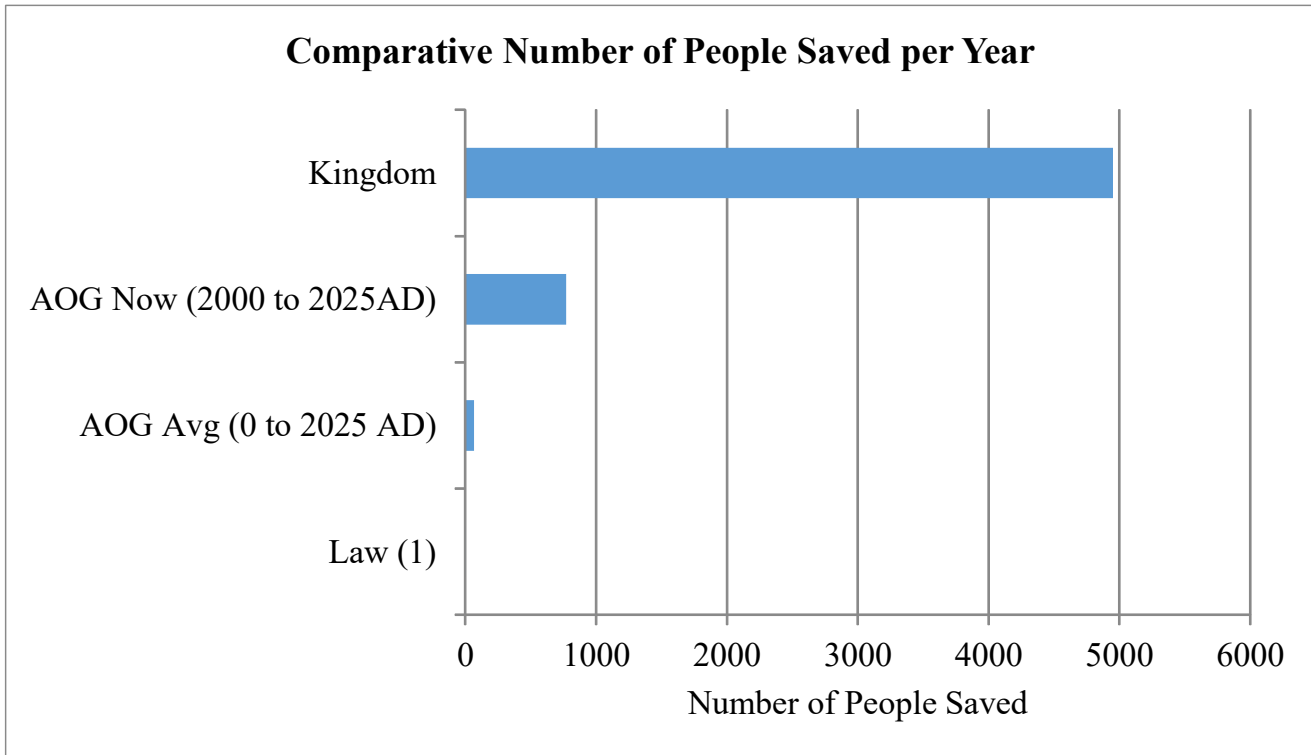
- Average number saved each year under the Law, 6000 BC to 0: **14,500**
- Average number saved each year during the Age of Grace, 0 AD to 2025: **1,000,000**
- Average number saved each year in the Kingdom: **72,000,000**

The scenario represented in Figure 9.3 is presented in an alternative way in Figure 9.4. The alternative way tries to reduce the "big numbers" and put everything on a relative basis. The Law period was 6,000 years long,<sup>68</sup> and few people lived on earth, whereas the Age of Grace has been 2,000 plus years long, and many people have live on earth. The Kingdom will be 1,000 years long, and many people will live on the earth. As in Chapter 6, an alternative way to view the estimates is to look at the number of people saved each year, using the Law as the basis of comparison. The comparisons will look at how many are

<sup>68</sup> The Law was not really 6,000 years long, since Moses received the Law around 1491 BC. Before the Law, there were other ages (dispensations), but for our purposes they all had a legal thrust and can all be grouped together as one age, extending from 6,000 BC until Christ.

saved in each time period compared to each person saved under the Law. The comparisons between Law, Grace, and Kingdom are certainly eye opening.

For each person (one person) saved under the Law, there have been 66 people saved in the AOG (the overall average). However, if we ignore the average during the AOG and look at those being saved today (2000 to 2025) the numbers become shockingly large: 772. We can see how the AOG has impacted the numbers being saved, which clearly is not to Satan's liking. However, the numbers that will be saved in the future is out of this world, stated with a bit of irony since the Kingdom of Heaven will be on earth. For each person saved under the Law, approximately **5,000 people will be saved** during the Kingdom.



**Figure 9.4.** The number of people saved during various time periods, compared to each person saved under the Law. Figure 6.6 was revised to include the Kingdom for this figure. The value for the Law is one (1), which cannot be seen.

The wisdom of God in progressively revealing His will can be seen in what is accomplished as the various ages roll along. Each age builds upon the other as God's plan, piece by piece, is put into action. In the previous age, the most significant event in history occurred when the Lord came to this earth and died for us. In our Age, the full accomplishments of His death were revealed in the mystery, the hallmark of His grace. The mystery could only be revealed after His death, in order to ensure the success of God's plan. With the truths of the mystery paving the way, including the Age of Grace, the next age will truly explode with new believers. We are indeed privileged to be living in our Age and to be used by Him in a way that will have a profound impact on the future.

Each age has its purpose and significant events. Speaking of significant events, look at what occurred under the Law: Christ was born, died, was raised from the dead, and ascended into Heaven. In the Age of Grace, the mystery was revealed so that the fullness of His death and resurrection could be experienced. The AOG could not exist without the Law, and the future Kingdom could not exist without

the Law and the AOG. Each age builds upon the other, leading to the golden age, the Kingdom. Our Age is vital in God's preparations for the ages to come; we are blessed above all before us in what we can experience of God's grace and wisdom.

### **Summarizing God's Plan**

The size and grandeur of creation reveal the majesty and greatness of the Creator. In the beginning, God planned to place the humans He would create on a little protected planet, where they would be safe and where He could work His redemptive plan. As we learn about our earthly home, we realize how small our planet is, and, correspondingly, how tiny and insignificant we seem to be. Scripture teaches that God created us for a purpose; perhaps He created everything in the universe to help fulfill that purpose. Since God has chosen all humans to partake in His redemptive plan, that does make us very special to Him, and thus to all creation.

Creation shows the delicate, compassionate, and precise care God took to provide a safe earthly home for us in an inhospitable universe. The spiritual realm is just as inhospitable, requiring God's special care and compassion on our behalf. We observe and learn about what He did to create our earthly home; however, we all intimately participate in His redemptive plan by choosing to accept or reject what He offers. Throughout human history, God progressively revealed His will and showed us the terribleness of sin; redemption required that sin had to be forgiven, somehow. Animal sacrifices were a provision by God to allow sinners to have their sins atoned, that is, covered up. Atoned sin was out of the sight of the sinner, and that was good from the sinner's perspective. However, atoned sin was not truly forgiven, since animal blood could only hide sin, not forgive it. So, from the divine perspective, atoned sin, though out of human sight, still existed and had to be dealt with, sometime, in a righteous manner. When sin was dealt with in a righteous manner, then the sinner could be forgiven and declared justified by God. In due time, Christ came to do just that, that is, to die and fully, permanently pay for the sins of humanity. His death allowed God to forgive everyone in the past whose sins were atoned, and all the sins of present and future believers.

Satan willingly assisted in Christ's death because he could inflict pain upon Christ and the Father, while fulfilling his own passions. In addition, Satan was willing to partake in the crucifixion because, from all that God had been revealed up to that time, the last days would come soon afterward, in the first century. With the last days in view, crucifying Christ seemed to make sense to Satan because the world's population was small (around 200 million) and few people were saved. From all that had been revealed, there was no time on God's clock for Christ's death to have any significant effect, and the lack of effect would result in few people being saved, even in the earthly Kingdom.

Shortly after Christ's death, God revealed the mystery that He had kept hidden from the beginning. God's mystery was, and is, the truth that pertains to the present Age of Grace. This newly revealed secret meant Satan did not know God would extend the time allotted for human existence by thousands of years, or that God would freely dispense His grace in a new way. Satan did not know the new Age would lead to an explosion in the world's population, resulting in billions of new believers. He had no inkling that a new Age was in God's mind, especially one that would witness to the angles in Heaven and have a profound impact upon the future. Had he known these things, clearly he would never have participated in Christ's death.

Today we live in that special Age, the Age of Grace, in which God is dispensing His grace solely on the basis of faith in Christ. Our Age began in the first century and will continue to the Rapture. God's purpose in the Age of Grace was planned before creation began. However, the existence of our Age had to be kept a secret from the very beginning; if not, Satan would have known what God had in mind and would not have participated in Christ's death. If Christ were not crucified, there would be no righteous solution to the sin problem, and every human that ever lived would remain dead in sin. Not one person could ever have his or her sins forgiven.

What God kept secret is called the mystery in First Corinthians 2:7. Keeping this secret turns out to be a true mystery, a secret plot to deny Satan certain wisdom. The greatest secret plot of all times revolved around the central event in all of human history. That event was Christ's death, which had to occur as God planned, at all costs. Had Satan known what God had planned, as a result of Christ's death, he would have ensured, at all costs, that Christ was not crucified. Thus, we have God and Satan involved in the battle of the ages, each working to promote their cause. As the time for Christ's death approached, God and Satan seemed in agreement on the fact Christ had to die. The agreement was, in fact, not based upon a mutual understanding, for God had kept a secret from everyone, from the creation of the world. God could only reveal His secret after Christ's death, which He did in the mid-first century to the Apostle Paul. The secret revealed the full accomplishments of Christ's death during the new Age of Grace, which itself added time to the clock of human existence, allowing the benefits of His death to be realized to the fullest.

In all ages, the heavens have declared the glory of God (Psa. 19:1). Today, His glory is seen primarily in the full accomplishments of His death (2 Cor. 4:6). The principalities and powers in Heaven are being instructed by the Body of Christ (the church) of the manifold wisdom of God, that is, what He is doing today as a result of the secret (Eph. 3:9-11). God has made it clear that in the ages to come, the riches of His grace and kindness to us in Christ Jesus will continue to be manifest in remarkable ways (Eph. 1:21, 2:7).

God progressively revealed His purpose for mankind in His Word, which amounted to a systematic presentation of the spiritual truth needed for those living in each age. Each age built upon the previous ages, and, as the ages rolled along, His purpose became clearer, truth upon truth, leading to the Age of Grace. In the previous Law Age, the Lord was born, died, and ascended to Heaven. In our Age, the Lord built upon the past and revealed the mystery. The mystery contains the full accomplishments of His death and the special Age needed for those accomplishments to take effect. His full accomplishments could only be revealed after Christ's death, in order to make sure the success of God's plan. With the full accomplishments of His death revealed and the insertion of a new Age, time rolled on.

And roll on it did! The full accomplishments of His death meant the introduction of many new and marvelous truths that were Age-specific, that is, applying only to our Age. God's perfect timing meant that secular, world events were coordinated to mesh with sacred events, and, as a result, brought about changes in the world that previously could have only been imagined. Sacred events, or factors, like the indwelling Holy Spirit and believers becoming members of the Body of Christ, resulted in a restraining influence upon lawlessness. Factors such as every person being equal before God and Salvation going to the gentiles, apart from Israel's conversion, resulted in a cooperative spirit among groups, nations, and individuals. The cooperative spirit among humans and the restraining influence upon lawlessness were not perfect due to human involvement, but the net effect was that of fostering discovery and advancements in the secular world.



The changes in the secular world resulted in increased life expectancy, reduced child mortality, governance that increased personal freedom and liberty, and the ability for societies to have individuals who had the opportunity to study science, agriculture, and health. In time, all these factors resulted in an explosion in the world's population, and the discoveries and advances in society enabled the good news of Christ to go to the far corners of the globe. The sacred results are astounding. Consider this: during the previous age, Salvation could be measured in the thousands of people saved per year, but in the Age of Grace, the number saved per year measures in the millions. The Age of Grace not only brought Divine advancements in the sacred realm, but those advancements impacted the secular world. Similarly, secular advancements enabled the spread of Christianity as both worked in a synergistic manner.

The advances and truths of our Age will be used by God to prepare the way for the future, a carry-over effect, as one age continues to build upon another. With our Age paving the way, the Kingdom will experience a growth in the number saved beyond realization, even in our Age. We can see the progressive nature of God's plan by observing the estimated numbers of those saved in each age (see bullets below). In comparison to the Law Age, something like 66 times more people are being saved each year in the Age of Grace. In the Kingdom, the number saved will likely be something like 72 times more each year than in the AOG.

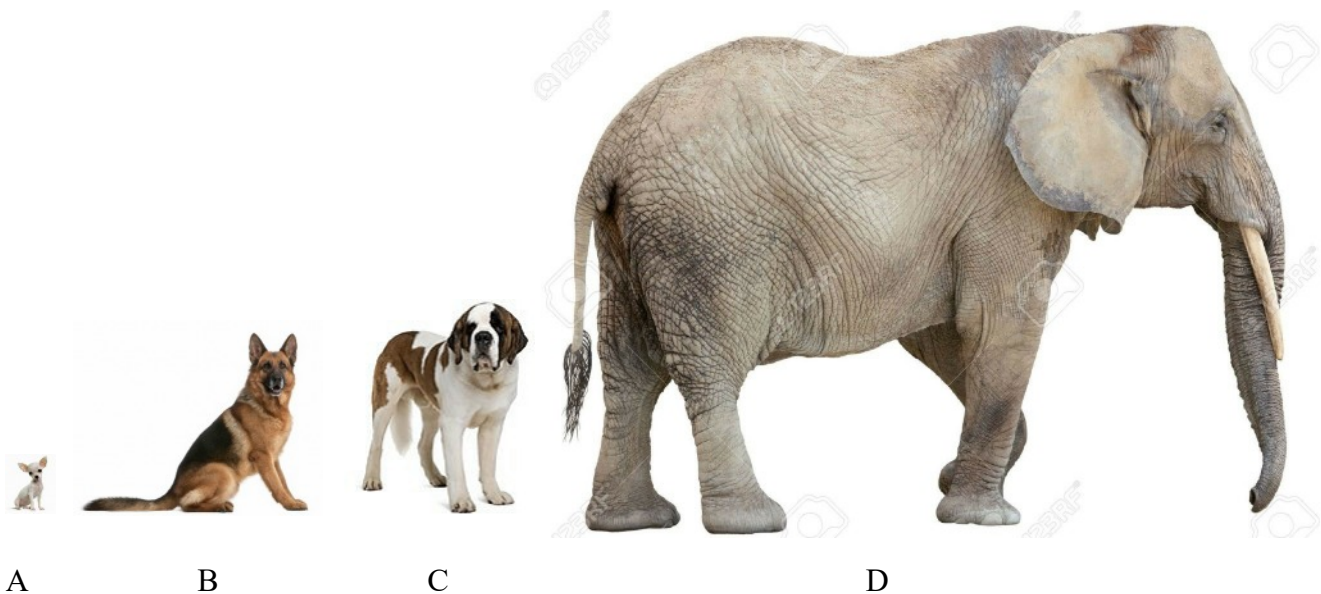
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Our Age could not exist without the Law, and the future Kingdom could not exist without the AOG. The AOG is being used by God to help shape what will occur in the coming earthly Kingdom. The Kingdom is the "golden age" of Christianity, in which God's ultimate purposes on earth are experienced. That golden age would be nothing but dross if Jesus Christ were not crucified. From creation forward, God guided history toward a certain event, and after that event, all of history will be based upon it. That event was the central event in all of human history. That event has a number, we call it THE number. THE number is 33433. This is the exact date of the most important event ever, indicating the year, the month, the day, the exact hour of His death. If Satan had an inkling of what would result from His death in our special Age, he would have made sure Christ was not crucified—the prospects of an uncrucified Christ are unimaginable. Thus, God's mystery was the top secret of all time; it had to be, in order to ensure His plan for human redemption would work; not even the angels in Heaven knew.

Knowing what God has done, is doing, and what lies ahead helps us better understand many things. We realize we are insignificant beings in the physical universe. However, in the spiritual realm, God indicates we are of great significance to Him. We are not special in ourselves or on our own merit, but because He chose us to be the only created beings with a spirit, and that spirit enables us to have faith and partake of His Salvation. Our frailty and vulnerability are precisely why He has sent His heart upon us; this is part of His very nature. His whole purpose for us is to protect us and offer us the ability to become new creatures. Thus, God is the champion of the weak and the despised of this world; His purpose is to comfort and save all who will believe in Christ. All saved individuals of our Age will be given new glorified bodies at the Rapture, and we will then judge the world and angels (1 Cor. 6:2-3). Through faith in Him, we humans can be turned into saints, very significant indeed. Today, God has revealed His purpose for those who believe in Him, which is to turn former sinners into glorious, new creations in Christ Jesus the Lord.

## Of Chihuahuas and Elephants

The progression in the average number of people saved each year throughout the various ages is visually displayed in Figure 9.5. The progression in size of the animals is obvious, but this figure cannot display the fact each new age depended upon, and built upon, the previous age(s). Satan saw the Chihuahua, but did not know anything about the German Shephard or Saint Bernard, since they were part of the mystery. Due to the mystery, Satan had a distorted view and mistakenly thought the number of Kingdom saints would be more like a small dog, for example, a beagle. He did not have the slightest notion of an elephant arising in the future. In the first century, he envisioned a future far different than anything that really did occur. Upon the revelation of the mystery and all that was associated with it, his right to gloat over his anti-God efforts was not only brought to naught, but completely reversed. The death of Christ is presently resulting in a spiritual bruise to Satan's head, and that bruise will reach its final completion shortly after the Kingdom when Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire.



**Figure 9.5.** The Chihuahua (A) represents the average number of people saved per year under the Law. The German Shephard (B) represents the average number of people saved per year during the AOG. The Saint Bernard (C) represents the average number of people saved per year in the AOG including the next century. The elephant (D) represents the average number of people saved per year during the Kingdom.

The often used expression, "an elephant in the room," refers to a topic obvious to the people in a room, but which cannot be discussed due to its sensitive nature. The mystery was not an elephant in the room in the past, because no one knew it existed. It is often an elephant now, because people can know of it but are afraid to discuss a topic that upsets cherished religious beliefs and interpretations of the Bible. Thanks to God's revealed truth in the mystery, we can clearly see the overall plan of God far clearer than before. The Apostle Paul indicates that God wants us to not only know about His special truth for today, but to also boldly proclaim it. However, our boldness is often met with cold resentment by others, so we have to be wise in how we approach discussions on this topic. His Plans for all humans, as revealed in what He is and will do, is something of unparalleled importance for the world. Our desire should be to proclaim to everyone, "Come and see what God hath wrought."

God's truth contained in the mystery will cause a huge symbolic elephant to come into existence during the Kingdom, a pachyderm of renown. This elephant represents the incredible number of people saved at that time, and that number is influenced significantly by events of our day. If Satan had a clue of the events our Age, or how those events would influence events in the Kingdom, he would have not crucified Christ. Because of the mystery, we can see how, in the final analysis, God clearly will be the victor in the battle with Satan. We can also see why He had to keep a secret for many millennia in order to assure that victory. The full accomplishments of Christ's death, including the blessings and glorious events of our Age, not only allow God to triumph over Satan; but, for us to be triumphant in Him.