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A Chart of God's Endgame

Review

The last two chapters explained my method of interpreting and organizing the Scriptures to understand God's endgame. Theologians refer to these methods as "biblical hermeneutics." A popular expression among theologians today is that God's inaugurated kingdom "already is, and is yet to come" in a future consummation. But this does not answer the question about what is yet to come.

My method of interpreting and organizing the Scriptures into a biblical theology of the future is based on the two orders of being:

- The Adamic order of being
- The new order of being as sons of God

It is also based on the two corresponding kingdoms of the triune God:

- The Son's earthly kingdom for a restored Adamic order of being in this Genesis age
- The Father's heavenly kingdom for the immortal sons of God in the eternal age to come

When reading Scripture, I try to discern whether it is referring to the Son's messianic kingdom during this Genesis age for a restored humanity, or to the Father's eternal kingdom of heaven for the transformed sons of God. For example, the vivid description of Christ's

messianic kingdom in Isaiah 65 describes the restored earth as a human paradise, with men and women having homes, vineyards, and large extended families.

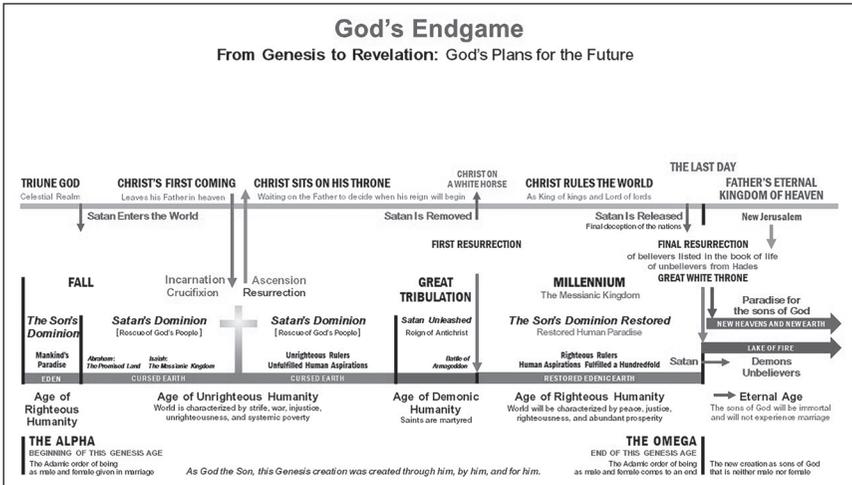
Whereas in Christ's answer to the Sadducees, he taught that in the Father's eternal kingdom, the Adamic order of being as male and female given in marriage comes to an end when the sons of God are resurrected into immortal bodies. The eternal sons of God will have real bodies, but they will be very different from the current natural bodies that are adapted for marriage and the natural earth.

And the fact that we will not be given in marriage in heaven is not some incidental detail about our eternal existence. Christ was teaching that there will be a categorical change in our whole being. The sons of God will have a totally different kind of bodily experience than the one we now have in our sexual Adamic bodies. And we will experience a totally different kind of communal life on the new earth. I will no longer be a son, a brother, a husband, a father, a grandfather, or an uncle—I will simply be a fellow child of God to my companions in heaven.

In this chapter, I will create a chart by outlining the major events of the Bible—past, present, and future. Then, in the next two chapters, I will explain how the different views on God's endgame compare to this chart.

PART 1: A Biblical Chart

Note: The following chart is best understood by watching a two-part video presentation online at www.godsendgame.net. It is also available on the website to download and print.



The Bible portrays God as living in his celestial home in heaven. From the celestial realm, God created this world: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). The heavens and the earth then had a presence before God in space and time.

God also created Adam: “Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature” (Gen. 2:7). Adam became a spiritual creature contained in a physical body of flesh and blood. God then created an Edenic paradise for Adam:

And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. . . . The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. (Gen. 2:8–15)

Adam was tasked with continuing to develop and manage the garden of Eden. But Adam was alone in this paradise and needed a helpmate, so God created Eve:

Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him.” . . . So the LORD God . . . took one of his ribs and . . . he made into a woman . . . Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Gen. 2:18–24)

Genesis continues to define mankind:

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion . . . over all the earth . . .” So God created man in his own image, . . . male and female he created them. . . . And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.” (Gen. 1:26–28)

This is a description of the Adamic order of being as male and female given in marriage. Adam and Eve were to experience the union of one flesh and to multiply, filling the earth with their offspring. Their extended family would develop the untamed earth into an Edenic paradise, managing the earth on God’s behalf. The garden of Eden was mankind’s paradise and a short age of righteous humanity. From his celestial throne in heaven, God would rule over mankind as they properly managed the earth. God would be intimately involved in the affairs of man, and he would delight in watching mankind develop a civilization that would bring him great joy and glory.

We discover from the New Testament that the one God is a triune God as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We also learn that this creation was uniquely created by the Son of God—through him, by him, and for him.

John revealed that Jesus Christ was God incarnate, the eternal Son of God through whom this creation was made (John 1:1–14). He was the Creator who spoke this Genesis creation into existence. Within the Trinity, the world was uniquely the Son’s earthly kingdom. He was the Alpha and the beginning of this Genesis age. Hebrews also proclaims this truth:

In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. . . . He upholds the universe by the word of his power. . . . “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands.” (Heb. 1:2–10)

Paul repeated this remarkable truth about the Son of God:

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. (Col. 1:16)

This Genesis creation was the Son's dominion over mankind. As he ruled over Adam and Eve, they were to rule over and manage his wonderful creation. The world would be the Son's kingdom on earth, and God's will would be done on earth as it was in heaven. The Son of God would visit Adam on this earth from time to time, but he primarily ruled over his creation from the celestial realm of heaven.

Then God tested Adam to see if he would remain under his Lordship:

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Gen. 2:15–17)

This restriction did not represent a deprivation, for Adam and Eve had everything they needed for a fruitful and abundant life.

Then Satan tempted Adam and Eve to reject God's dominion over them and set up their own autonomous kingdom of mankind: “But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’” (Gen. 3:4–5).

Adam and Eve succumbed to this temptation, which led to the tragic fall of mankind: “So when the woman saw . . . that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate” (Gen. 3:6).

Their flagrant disobedience led to their insubordination, insurrection, and rebellion against God's rule over them. With the knowledge of good and evil, they believed they no longer needed God to be their Lord. They could be the Lord of their own lives and of this world.

This infuriated God and brought down his wrath on mankind. Because of their rebellion, Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden of Eden, and God put a curse on the natural earth:

To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children." . . . And to Adam he said, . . . "cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; . . . By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." . . . Therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden. (Gen. 3:16–23)

Mankind became sinful creatures separated from the spiritual life of God. Now they would experience spiritual and mortal death. Paradise was lost, and the world became a hostile environment. Mankind would experience deprivation and misery on a degenerate earth until they died.

There was also a regime change when God allowed Satan and his horde of demons into their paradise, and the world became Satan's dominion. He became the god of sinful mankind, usurping the Son of God as true Lord of this world. As Paul taught, "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:1–2). Sinful mankind was now under Satan's influence and control, and an age of unrighteous humanity began. The world became characterized by strife, war, injustice, unrighteousness, and systemic poverty. Mankind would now have to be rescued if they were ever going to escape from Satan's dominion.

Because of the fall, there are four fundamental problems with the world:

- It is a satanic world.
- Humans have a sinful nature.
- The world is ruled by unrighteous men and women.
- The creation is under a curse.

This explains why the world, even with its residual natural beauty and moments of joy, is such an inhospitable place with so much evil, misery, and death. It is definitely not paradise on earth. Some of us are fortunate enough to have fairly good lives that can be deeply fulfilling, but they are relatively short lives.

There are fundamental problems with humanity because the world is no longer the Son of God's kingdom on earth, even though this cursed earth was, and remains, his creation. God remains sovereign while he allows Satan and rebellious mankind to live ungodly lives, but he has not yet reimposed his righteous will on this earth.

Fallen mankind could have gone the way of Satan and the fallen angels, with no hope of salvation. There is no plan of redemption for fallen angels. They are purely evil creatures destined for wrath and hell. But God in his sovereignty decided to love mankind and save many of us from our fallen, sinful natures. After the fall, he introduced his plans for the future redemption of mankind and the eventual punishment of Satan and his removal from this world:

The LORD God said to the serpent, . . . "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise [or crush] your head, and you shall bruise [or strike] his heel." (Gen. 3:14–15)

God promised a Savior who will come from a descendant of Eve and who will eventually crush Satan. The process will bring some measure of suffering to the redeemer. This indicates that the redeemer will likely sacrifice his life to redeem mankind from Satan's dominion. But there is hope for the Son's earthly kingdom to be restored and for the restoration of mankind on a restored Edenic earth.

The Call of Abraham

God's plan of redemption is further developed with the call of Abraham, who was a descendant of Eve:

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and

make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. . . . In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Gen. 12:1–3)

God’s plan involves a nation formed from the heirs of Abraham, which will bring some form of salvation to all nations. His plan continued to develop with Moses and the nation of Israel. After the exodus from Egypt, God told Moses and the Jews: “Go in and take possession of the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give to them and to their offspring after them” (Deut. 1:8).

As Israel became a nation, David became their king. Through the prophet Nathan, God informed David that one of his sons would usher in a restored dominion of God that would never be usurped by Satan again: “When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, . . . and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Sam. 7:12–13).

Isaiah also foretold of the promised son of David and the coming Messiah, who will govern Israel and the whole world:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government [of Israel and the world] shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of *peace* there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with *justice* and with *righteousness* from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. (Isa. 9:6–7)

The future Messiah would be a human being as a descendant of Eve, Abraham, and King David—as well as being “Mighty God.” The Messiah would be the God-man who reestablishes the Son’s kingdom on this earth. The world will be characterized by peace, justice, and righteousness. It will be an age of restored righteous humanity. The prophets described the messianic kingdom as an earthly kingdom in which the earth is restored to its Edenic condition. It will be a restoration of the Adamic order of being as originally intended in the garden of Eden.

Paul referenced this prophecy in Isaiah, which describes the Messiah as both the son of David and the Son of God:

The gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh [“a child is born”] and was declared to be the Son of God [“Mighty God”]. (Rom. 1:1–4)

Christ's First Coming

Christ's first coming was of the seed of the woman, born of Mary:

And the angel said to her, . . . “behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, . . . The Holy Spirit will come upon you, . . . therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.” (Luke 1:30–35)

The Son of God left his Father in heaven and entered the world through his incarnation as the human son of David: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:1, 14).

God the Father loved mankind. He sent his Son to become incarnate as a human being, which is a key part of his plan of redemption:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16–17)

However, only a remnant of faithful Jews in Jesus' day responded to Christ: “He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own [creation and Jewish people], and his own people did not receive him” (John 1:10–11). That generation of Jews was hardhearted, blind, unregenerate, and unfaithful. And they had their own Messiah crucified by the Romans, even though Christ demonstrated many miraculous signs and wonders and numerous displays of love, compassion, and forgiveness.

But in God's divine plan, Jesus was crucified for our sins and resurrected to overcome Satan's power of sin and death over us. The cross was God's method of justifying the ungodly so that we could be reconciled with a holy God. Before we can enter his restored righteous kingdom on a restored Edenic earth, we first need to be made righteous through Christ's sacrificial death on the cross:

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, . . . And you, who were dead in your trespasses . . . God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. (Col. 1:21–22; 2:13–14)

The disciples should have known from Isaiah that the Messiah must first die for our sins before we could enter his kingdom:

He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; . . . Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; . . . Smitten by God, . . . he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, . . . And the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. . . . Although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. . . . By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous. (Isa. 53:3–13)

After his resurrection, Christ appeared to two people walking home to the village of Emmaus. They did not understand why the Messiah had been crucified. He was supposed to overthrow the tyrannical Romans and set up his messianic kingdom on this earth. Christ rebuked them for their failure to understand the necessity of his crucifixion:

Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, . . . our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. . . . And he

said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory [as the ruler of Israel and this world]?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:19–27)

But the disciples still expected Jesus to set up his messianic kingdom. They probably thought that since the Romans could not kill him, he would overthrow their tyrannical regime and begin his reign over a restored Israel:

So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.” . . . And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. (Acts 1:6–9)

Christ confirmed that there would be a messianic kingdom in the future but told them the Father decides when his reign will begin.

Christ then ascended in the clouds, when he entered the celestial realm of heaven to rejoin his Father. The prophet Daniel also foresaw the day when Christ would ascend in the clouds to heaven and would be given dominion over the world by the Father. The reference to the Ancient of Days is a reference to God the Father:

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man [Christ ascends in the clouds], and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. (Dan. 7:13–14)

After his resurrection, Christ ascended into the clouds to the right hand of God the Father in heaven, in fulfillment of Daniel’s vision. He was given dominion over the whole world, not just over Israel.

The Jewish leaders were familiar with Daniel's vision and understood that the son of man was no ordinary man because he ascends into the very presence of God in heaven. They assumed that "the son of man" was a divine being. And when Christ applied the phrase to himself when he was being questioned by the chief priests and scribes, they accused him of blasphemy for claiming to be this divine being:

Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy [for claiming to be this divine being]." (Matt. 26:64–65)

Christ now sits on his throne in heaven, where he is waiting on the Father, or the Ancient of Days, to decide when his reign will begin. He now has all the divine power necessary to rule this world:

And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age [the Genesis age] but also in the one to come [the eternal age]. (Eph. 1:19–21)

As the book of Hebrews plainly teaches, however, he is not currently using his divine power and authority to remove Satan and the ungodly rulers of this world and reclaim his Genesis creation:

"You made him [Christ] for a little while lower than the angels [during the incarnation]; you have crowned him with glory and honor [after his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension], putting everything in subjection under his feet ["to him was given dominion"]." Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control [he is sovereign]. *At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him* [his enemies continue to operate]. (Heb. 2:7–8)

That is because Satan has not yet been removed, and the world remains his dominion. Christ is waiting on the Father to decide when Satan will be removed and when his reign will begin. As Hebrews further teaches:

But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, *waiting* from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. (Heb. 10:12–13)

The disciples expected Christ to set up his messianic kingdom when he first came into this world. They were even jockeying for positions of authority and power in what they thought was his imminent reign. Instead, he left this world, leaving them in a hostile, demonic world where they were often unjustly persecuted. But they began to understand that the ascended Christ would have to wait on his Father to determine when his reign would begin.

In the meantime, Christ taught his disciples to shift their focus to the Father's eternal kingdom of heaven: "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matt. 6:33). Soon after Pentecost, Peter initially focused on the restoration of Israel and the messianic kingdom:

He may send . . . Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago [the messianic kingdom on this earth]. (Acts 3:20–21)

But in his following letters, Peter shifts the focus to our inheritance of the Father's imperishable kingdom of heaven:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his [the Father's] great mercy, he has caused us to be born again [as sons of God] to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead [we hope for the same resurrection and ascension to heaven], to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. (1 Peter 1:3–4)

The focus is clearly on the Father's eternal kingdom of heaven. Until then, Christ continues to gather his people chosen by the Father out of Satan's dominion of darkness and bring them into his kingdom:

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Col. 1:13–14)

Now that Christ has died for our sins, he rescues his people who lived before his coming. And he rescues his people today and brings us into his righteous kingdom. But even after we are rescued from Satan's dominion, we remain in this fallen, demonic world ruled by Satan. Paul warns:

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (Eph. 6:11–12)

Demons are still very active in this world. And unrighteous men and women under their influence continue to rule over the nations. As a result, many of our human aspirations for a good life on this earth go unfulfilled. We may experience inner joy and peace through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but we continue to long for an abundant life that is free of Satan and the curse. Or as Paul taught, we continue to live on a cursed earth:

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, . . . For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. (Rom. 8:19–22)

During this interim period leading up to the time when Christ uses his divine power to set up his messianic kingdom, the rulers of this world will continue to cause wars between nations. Jesus said, "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (Matt. 24:7). The curse on the earth will remain in place as well. Jesus said,

“There will be famines and earthquakes in various places” (Matt. 24:7). That is because these events are leading up to even greater pain during the future Great Tribulation: “All these [wars and natural disasters] are but the beginning of the birth pains” (Matt. 24:8).

The disciples were expecting Christ to set up his messianic kingdom, but the nation of Israel rejected its Messiah when he came into this world during the first century. Therefore, Christ informed the unfaithful Jews that their temple would be destroyed as a sign that God had temporarily abandoned them:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it [unfaithful Israel]! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing [unrepentant Israel]! See, your house is left to you desolate [the temple will be destroyed]. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord [repentant Israel].” (Matt. 23:37–38)

This occurred in AD 70 when the Romans sacked Jerusalem and the temple was destroyed. But Christ foresaw the day when they will indeed repent and believe in their Messiah.

Christ warned the disciples to flee Judea when they saw the Roman armies approaching to destroy the city and the temple:

And he said, . . . “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, . . . for these are days of vengeance, . . . For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people [the unbelieving Jews]. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” (Luke 21:8–24)

The Jewish Christians in Jerusalem heeded Christ’s advice and escaped this judgment and tribulation against unrepentant Israel.

PART 2: The Great Tribulation

Many theologians believe the Great Tribulation took place in AD 70 and that it was directed against the generation of Jews who rejected Christ. For the purposes of this chart, however, I will assume that the Great Tribulation is a future event that affects all people living at that time. Before Christ's reign begins, there will be a period of unprecedented tribulation against the saints.

The prophet Daniel noted that the end of the Antichrist's reign of terror is the event that leads to the messianic kingdom. The Antichrist is described as a beast and also as a horn that appears on a beast:

Then I desired to know the truth about the fourth beast [the Antichrist], which was different from all the rest [exceptionally evil], . . . As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them [during the Great Tribulation], until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom [the Son's dominion established]. (Dan. 7:19–22)

The tribulation experienced in AD 70 was directed at the unrepentant Jews. The saints could escape that tribulation by leaving Jerusalem when they saw the approaching Roman armies. But notice that when the Antichrist initiates the Great Tribulation, his persecution is specifically directed at the saints, and they will not be able to easily escape it. Also notice that the Ancient of Days will determine when the Messiah's reign will begin and the saints possess his Son's kingdom.

The world is currently Satan's dominion, and Christians are living in hostile territory: "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Satan is a powerful fallen angel with tremendous influence in the world. But the Scriptures teach that he is restricted in how much evil he can instigate. He must approach the throne of God in heaven to gain permission to attack us. Job's story illustrates this restraint.

The book of Daniel describes the archangel Michael as a powerful angel who can restrain Satan. When Michael is removed from restraining him, Satan will be unleashed on the world and the Great Tribulation will begin. This is the reign of the Antichrist:

At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people [Michael, who protects Israel against Satan, is removed from restraining Satan]. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time [the unprecedented Great Tribulation begins]. (Dan. 12:1)

Once Michael is no longer restraining him, Satan can work through the Antichrist, who claims to be God incarnate on this earth:

And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god [he makes himself out to be God], and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. (Dan. 11:36)

Satan and his Antichrist are unleashed on the world, which leads to an age of demonic humanity during which the saints are martyred in large numbers. Few will survive their reign of terror.

Revelation 12 also describes a cosmic battle in heaven between Michael and Satan, which culminates in Satan being unleashed on the world:

Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon [Satan]. . . . And the great dragon . . . was thrown down to the earth, . . . “But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!” . . . And I saw a beast [the Antichrist] . . . And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. . . . And the beast was . . . allowed to make war on the saints. . . . If anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints. (12:7–12; 13:1–10)

Satan and the Antichrist go to war against the saints. Unbelievers will be deceived into believing the Antichrist is God incarnate and will become his followers. They will worship Satan and his Antichrist:

The whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. And they worshiped the dragon [Satan], for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast [the Antichrist], saying, “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?” (Rev. 13:3–4)

Paul warned us to be on the lookout for the Antichrist entering a rebuilt temple, making himself out to be God:

Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come [the second coming], unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. . . . The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders. (2 Thess. 2:3–9)

Jesus, too, warned us to look for the Antichrist entering the temple:

So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), . . . For then there will be great tribulation [against the saints], such as has not been from the beginning of the world. [As Daniel says, “This horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them.”] (Matt. 24:15–21)

This outpouring of demonic wrath against God’s people will last for three and a half years.

John taught that the Tribulation comes to an end at the battle of Armageddon. Christ will appear in the celestial realm of heaven riding on a white horse to engage the Antichrist and his armies. Like a sharp sword coming out of his mouth, the word destroys the Antichrist and his armies:

Then I saw heaven opened [the celestial realm], and behold, a white horse! . . . From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. . . . On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. . . . And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet. . . . These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse. (Rev. 19:11–21)

The Millennium

The next major eschatological event is the millennial reign of Christ, which occurs after Satan's removal from this world. In the next two chapters, I explain the various interpretations of the millennium, but for now let's continue to develop this chart based on the sequence of events found in Revelation.

Satan has been in this world ever since the fall. He will now be removed from this realm so that the Son's dominion can be restored. John taught that during the millennium, Satan will be locked up in a prison made for demons. This is a real game changer:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while. (Rev. 20:1–3)

This marks the beginning of the millennial reign of Christ, when he will rule the world as King of kings and Lord of lords. The prophet Isaiah also foretold this cosmic regime change:

On that day the LORD will punish the host of heaven, in heaven [Satan and his demons], . . . They will be gathered together as prisoners in a pit; they will be shut up in a prison, . . . Then the moon will be confounded and the sun ashamed, for the LORD of hosts reigns on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem [the Messiah's reign begins]. (Isa. 24:21–23)

The cosmic changes in the moon and the sun metaphorically describe this regime change in the spiritual realm. Satan and his demons are gathered up and imprisoned so that the reign of Christ can begin. Jesus was probably referencing this verse and similar verses from the prophets when he described the cosmic regime change that takes place immediately after the Tribulation comes to an end:

For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. . . . Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken [cosmic regime change when Satan is removed and Christ begins his reign]. (Matt. 24:21–29)

During the millennium, Christ, as the Son of God, will use his divine power and authority to rule the world, as he did before the fall. It was his creation to begin with before Satan came into this world, so he has a divine right to remove Satan and rule this world:

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ,” . . . And the twenty-four elders . . . worshiped God, saying, “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was [a divine, eternal being], for you have taken your great power and begun to reign [over his Genesis creation].” (Rev. 11:16–17)

Notice that John refers to Christ’s deity when he foresaw the day when Christ will rule the world.

The prophets taught that the Messiah’s reign will begin in Israel and then extend to all nations:

“As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” I will tell of the decree: The LORD [the Father] said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and *I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.*” (Ps. 2:6–8)

When Christ rules the world, the whole earth will experience the messianic kingdom:

The LORD has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. . . . All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. . . . He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity. (Ps. 98:2–9)

The millennium will be an age of righteous humanity for all mankind. The whole world, not just the nation of Israel, will be characterized by peace, justice, righteousness, and abundant prosperity. The book of Micah describes this major transition from a world characterized by war to a world characterized by global peace:

He [the Messiah] shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations far away [he rules the world]; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore [global peace]. (4:3)

Many people equate the Great Commission with spreading the gospel. However, notice that Isaiah refers to the *realization* of the messianic kingdom as the good news of salvation for the world:

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns" [the gospel realized when Christ rules the world]. . . . The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see [and experience] the salvation of our God. (Isa. 52:7-10)

Salvation involves more than just personal salvation from God's wrath on Judgment Day. It includes a salvation of humanity on this earth during Christ's reign, when all the ends of the earth shall see and experience the salvation of our God and Creator. Isaiah teaches that the realization of Christ's reign is a critical part of the good news.

In the following passage, I believe Christ was quoting from Psalm 98 when he affirmed that his messianic kingdom will be established on this earth before the end of the world. In effect, Christ was teaching that not only will the good news be preached throughout the world, but the prophetic vision of the messianic kingdom will be realized on this earth before the end of the world:

And this gospel of the kingdom [“Your God reigns”] will be proclaimed throughout the whole world [to “the ends of the earth”] as a testimony to all nations [when “all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God”], and then the end [of the world] will come. (Matt. 24:14)

Notice how John describes his kingdom as being realized on this earth:

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ [“Your God reigns”].” . . . And the twenty-four elders . . . worshiped God, saying, “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was [a divine, eternal being], for you have taken your great power and begun to reign [over the world].” (Rev. 11:15–17)

The gospel of the kingdom is that the Son’s dominion over his Genesis creation will be restored when he exercises his reign over this earth.

A Restored Humanity

The prophets described the messianic kingdom as a restoration of our humanity and as a human paradise on a restored Edenic earth. People will marry, build houses, and plant vineyards:

“They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. . . . They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity [extended families]. . . . The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox [restored Genesis creation], . . . They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain [peace and prosperity on earth],” says the LORD. (Isa. 65:21–25)

Ezekiel also described the abundant life that God’s sheep will experience on the restored earth:

And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase [incredible abundance], and they shall be secure in their land. . . . And you are my sheep, human sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Lord God. . . . This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden [the restored earth]. (34:27–31; 36:35)

Many amillennial theologians point out that the only place the Bible references a 1,000-year reign of Christ is in the highly symbolic book of Revelation. But the millennium can easily be linked to numerous other Old Testament verses that vividly describe the Messiah's earthly kingdom.

An important New Testament passage that many theologians overlook is the story of a rich man asking Jesus how he can inherit eternal life. He walked away sad because Jesus asked him to give away his wealth and follow him in order to inherit eternal life. The disciples, who were willing to sacrificially follow Christ, then came to Jesus and asked what their reward would be for the deprivation they were experiencing by following him. He promised the disciples that in the future when he is ruling the world, they will experience an abundant life that will be a hundred times better than the rich man's life. They will live on a regenerated earth that is an Edenic paradise. In addition, after experiencing this human paradise on earth, they will inherit eternal life in the eternal age to come:

Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world [regenerated earth], when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne [and rule the world], you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel [as ruling elders over Israel]. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold [in this Genesis age] and [in addition] will inherit eternal life [in the eternal age to come]." (Matt. 19:28–29; cf. Mark 10:28–30)

The "new world" is best translated "regenerated earth," which will happen when the curse is removed and the earth is restored to its Edenic condition. This is a reference to Christ's millennial reign when

he sits on his glorious throne and rules the world as King of kings and Lord of lords. The disciples will even assist him in ruling over Israel. The disciples will inherit a restored human paradise, which Christ described as an Adamic paradise with homes, land, and extended human families. The disciples' human aspirations for an abundant life will be fulfilled a hundredfold.

But how are the disciples and all the departed saints going to inherit the restored earth if they have already died before Christ's reign has begun? John proposed that they will experience the first resurrection:

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed [human rulers]. . . . They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. . . . This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! . . . and they will reign with him for a thousand years. (Rev. 20:4–6)

The first resurrection enables all the departed saints that God has ransomed from all nations throughout the ages to inherit the restored earth during his messianic kingdom.

Theologians debate what kind of resurrection this represents. Let's assume that it is a resurrection of the bodies of the departed saints. That is the only form in which they can actually reside on the earth. John wrote:

By your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and *they shall reign on the earth*. (Rev. 5:9–10)

Notice that they reign on the earth, not in the celestial realm of heaven, which is why they must be resurrected into physical bodies. The fact that the messianic kingdom is made up of ransomed people "from every tribe and language and people and nation" correlates with the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded

you” (Matt. 28:19–20). Ransomed people from all nations will experience the restoration.

At the end of the millennium, Satan will be released from his prison for one final deception of the nations. But this rebellion will not succeed. After this final deception, Satan will be sent to the eternal lake of fire, along with all the demons:

And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Rev. 20:7–10)

During the millennium, Satan will be held in check, as in the game of chess. But this is now checkmate for Satan. Isaiah also foretold this day:

They [the demonic host of heaven] will be gathered together as prisoners in a pit; they will be shut up in a prison [Satan and the demons are gathered up from around the world and imprisoned during Christ's reign], and after many days [one thousand years] they will be punished [thrown into the lake of fire]. (24:22)

The Last Day

This brings us to the last day, which is a multifaceted event. It is the final resurrection, or what is sometimes referred to as the “general” resurrection. It is the end of this Genesis age, literally the last day of this Genesis creation and the beginning of the eternal age. Christ will create the new heavens and new earth as the eternal habitat for the sons of God:

From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. . . . Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, . . . And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new [the new habitat for the sons of God].” . . . And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end [of this Genesis creation].” (Rev. 20:11—21:1–6)

Christ is the Alpha of this Genesis creation in that it was created by him and for him, and he is the Omega of this creation when he brings it to an end. And just as it was the Son of God within the Trinity who created this Genesis creation, it will be the Son of God who creates the eternal new heavens and new earth.

Many theologians believe the Genesis earth will not be destroyed on the last day but will be only purified by a surface fire. They believe the eternal kingdom is a restored Genesis earth that exists in an eternal form. But John made it clear that the current heavens and earth perish on the last day, for they will no longer have a *presence* before God and will no longer have a *place* in the cosmos. The new heavens and new earth, therefore, are not a continuation of this Genesis creation. There will certainly be continuity with this creation, given that the eternal kingdom will be new versions of the current heavens and earth. It will be a real place for God’s people who will have real resurrected bodies. Paul wrote that the current Genesis creation is groaning to transcend its current “bondage to corruption” for it to somehow become a part of the eternal kingdom:

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (Rom. 8:20–21)

Just as our natural bodies will be transformed and taken to the new earth, so, too, this Genesis creation also transitions to the eternal new earth. How this transition works remains a mystery at this time.

Judgment Day

The last day is also Judgment Day, when Christ sits on his Great White Throne and judges the world.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. . . . And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. . . . And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. . . . Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, . . . Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. . . . And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:11–15)

The final resurrection will be of believers who are listed in the book of life. They will be resurrected, judged, and rewarded for their good deeds and will then inherit eternal paradise in the eternal new heavens and new earth. At the same time, unbelievers will be resurrected from hades, judged for their evil deeds, and sent to the eternal lake of fire, along with Satan and the demons.

Jesus informed us about the final resurrection on Judgment Day:

Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming [on Judgment Day] when all who are in the tombs [believers and unbelievers] will hear his voice and come out [they are resurrected], those who have done good to the resurrection of life [believers], and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment [unbelievers who are held in hades]. (John 5:28–29)

On Judgment Day, the righteous will inherit the Father's eternal heavenly kingdom, while sinners will be sent to the lake of fire.

The sons of God will experience an immortal existence with God on the new earth.

Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. . . . and God himself will be with them as their God. . . . and death shall be no more [immortality], . . . The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. (Rev. 21:3–7)

In heaven we will be immortal sons of God and will live in the very presence of God in all his glory. The Adamic order of being as male and female will come to an end, and we will be a new creation as sons of God that is neither male nor female. In the eternal age, the sons of God will be immortal and will not experience marriage.

John described the New Jerusalem as the eternal bride of Christ that comes down out of heaven to the new earth:

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, . . . Then came one of the seven angels who . . . spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he . . . showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. . . . The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, . . . And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty [the Father] and the Lamb [the Son]. (Rev. 21:2–22)

John wrote that the triune God and the New Jerusalem will come down *from* heaven to what is also described as the kingdom of heaven *on* the eternal new earth. I am not sure how all this works, and any attempt to explain this dual description of heaven would be only speculation.

From Genesis to Revelation: God's Plans for the Future

Some theologians organize the flow of biblical events according to God's covenants or the various dispensations. But I prefer to view the flow of biblical history as a succession of ages of mankind:

- In the beginning, there was an age of righteous humanity on an Edenic earth.
- The fall took place, which ushered in an age of unrighteous humanity on a cursed earth.
- The Great Tribulation will occur, and an age of demonic humanity will begin.
- During the millennium, there will be a restored age of righteous humanity on a restored Edenic earth.

- On the last day, this creation and the human experience will come to an end. In the eternal age, the sons of God will inherit eternal life in the new heavens and new earth, and unbelievers will inherit eternal condemnation in the lake of fire.

This is the biblical data that theologians must integrate into a logical biblical theology of the future. When does Christ return? What is the nature of the millennium? What is the nature of the first resurrection? What is the nature of the final resurrection on Judgment Day? The next chapter explains how premillennialists answer these questions and interpret this chart of God's endgame.