

God's Plan

Our Place

God's Eternal Plan and Our Present Place In It

by

ScVerlin Barton

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes in the Old Testament God seems like such an ogre. He threw us out of the garden for eating fruit that was good for us (Genesis 3:1–24). He almost wiped the entire human race off the face of the earth because He didn't like who we were marrying (Genesis 6:1–7). When we achieved world unity and were working on a common goal, it displeased Him so He confused our languages and scattered us throughout all the earth (Genesis 11:1–9).

He promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob a specific portion of land which they never received. As a matter of fact God even admits that none of the Old Testament saints received all of what was promised them (Hebrews 11:39). And it doesn't stop there. Throughout the entire Old Testament God seems to kill people at will. There were times He ordered the Jews to not only kill but to kill every man, woman, child, and beast and take none of the spoils.

Moving on into the New Testament we find that the apostles had very difficult lives, especially Paul (2 Corinthians 11:23–28). Along with their hard lives most of them suffered horrible deaths. And then, after all this God does an about face and commands us to love our enemies!

And it doesn't stop there!

Let's apply a little logic. Since God is perfect, all powerful, and knows everything, and has been interacting and actively working with humans for thousands of years, you would think this perfect, all powerful, all knowing God, would be able to "get it right" and produce heaven on earth in a much shorter time period. If He is trying to teach humanity certain godly lessons throughout history He has failed again. Someone accurately observed: "The only thing we have learned from history is that we do not learn from history." If God only gives laws so that He can bless us, why is there so much suffering in the lives of godly people? And in comparison there are some pretty rotten people who are living very prosperous and happy lives.

What's going on?

Chapter 2

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

What if God is not trying to make this world a better place for us?

There is a different way to view God's interaction with humans, a bigger picture. This bigger picture is revealed in the Old Testament book of Job. In this bigger view God reveals that there are relationships between God, the angels, Satan, and humans.

In Job it is revealed that God and Satan have a disagreement, a conflict. In this conflict there are active relationships between Himself, Satan, and humanity. This conflict and the relationships within the conflict continue throughout the entire Bible.

It is an understanding of this conflict and these relationships that puts a different perspective on God's actions and makes sense of all human suffering.

The Conflict

“But you said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” (Isaiah 14:13–14)¹

When Satan first rebelled against God, he focused on two issues. First, he wanted to take God's place as ruler over the entire creation. The second issue was one of character: Satan wanted to make himself like God. Satan not only wanted to rule like God, he wanted to become like God. Satan not only wanted God's ability to rule but he wanted His character.

And in Genesis 3 we find that humans become involved in this spiritual conflict. As a matter of fact the entire earth appears to become the battleground for God's rebuffing action against Satan's rebellion! Our lives and relationships go far beyond our physical life.

The Bible is the story of our relationship and involvement in the conflict between God and Satan.

The New Perspective

In Colossians 3:1–2 we are commanded to have a spiritual perspective. When our focus

¹ While some have argued that this text is not about Satan, C. Fred Dickason in chapter 13, pages 127–137, of his book *Angels Elect & Evil* presents the best understanding and balanced approach of this passage, which is reflected here.

is placed in the spiritual realm, we see the ongoing spiritual conflict between God and Satan and we see God's actions toward us from a new spiritual perspective.

With this new spiritual perspective we understand that we are directly and intimately involved in the conflict between God and Satan (Job & Ephesians 6:12).

Chapter 3 GOD'S ETERNAL PLAN

God's plan is not to simply save humans and get us into heaven.

For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him *to reconcile all things to Himself*, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.* (Colossians 1:19–20, *emphasis added*)

Satan's rebellion affected all creation. God's plan includes all creation. And the goal of His plan is only achieved in eternity future, it is not achieved during time (Revelation 20:14–22:5). This means that throughout *all time* God is acting to complete His plan and achieve the goal of eternal reconciliation.

What is reconciliation? In Scripture *reconciliation* simply means "to bring back into unity." This unity is accomplished when everything is once again placed back under God's unchallenged rulership. This means everything will exist only under God's wonderful rulership for all eternity (Ephesians 1:9–10; Colossians 1:19–20; Revelation 21:1—22:5). Since God's plan is to once again establish His unchallenged, eternal rulership over all creation, I will more accurately refer to His plan "Eternal Rulership."

Eternal Rulership

In the beginning God created everything to operate perfectly under His wonderful rulership (Genesis 1:1; Psalms 148:2–5, 103:20; Job 38:4–7; Genesis 1:27–28). Satan challenged God's rulership, rebelled against God's rules, took one-third of the angels with him, and was allowed to establish an area of rulership (Isaiah 14:13–14; Ezekiel 28:14–15; Revelation 12:4; 2 Corinthians 4:4). Humanity also rebelled against God and chose to follow Satan (Genesis 3:6–8; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Romans 3:23). Because of this rebellion, the earth, all the plants, and all the animals were affected in a negative way (Genesis 3:17–18, 9:2).

But God has revealed:

“And I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; her offspring will attack your head, and you will attack her offspring’s heel.”
(Genesis 3:15 NET)

God revealed that He was going to crush Satan’s head—Satan’s rulership². God did not tell Satan that He was going to kill him, God told Satan that He was going to destroy his rulership. God also revealed that He would use humans – not angels – to accomplish His goal.

Christ became a human in conformity to God’s plan to use humans to destroy Satan’s rulership and to reconcile all creation to God’s wonderful unchallenged rulership (1 John 3:8; Colossians 1:19–20).

Chapter 4

ETERNAL RULERSHIP THROUGHOUT ALL TIME

“For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says:
‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD,
"SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,
*UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR
YOUR FEET.*” (Acts 2:34–35, *emphasis added*)

The above verse reveals important information about the progression of God’s plan. The word *until* reveals three phases of God’s plan of eternal rulership.

Phase one would be the time before *Christ was seated*. Since God said “sit at My right hand,” this means that prior to this seating arrangement *Christ was not seated* at God’s right hand. In phase one, Christ occupied a position in the godhead where He was not seated at God’s right hand.

In phase two, Christ is seated at God’s right hand. But this seating arrangement will only last *until* His enemies are made into a footstool. When “Operation Footstool” is accomplished, the word *until* dictates that there will be another change in Christ’s

²Any time the word *head* is used figuratively in either the Hebrew or the Greek, it always means “rulership.” For example, “head of the tribe,” “the head priest,” “the head of the nation,” or “head of the body.”

position.

Phase three commences when all rule and authority is handed over to God:

Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when he has brought to an end all rule and all authority and power.

(1 Corinthians 15:24 NET)

Eternal Rulership does not progress, nor has it ever progressed, based solely on God's relationship with humans. Eternal Rulership is based on God's progressing victory over Satan and his rulership.

God's plan (Eternal Rulership) is not completed when humans are taught all the lessons we need to know nor when the entire earth is "won for Christ"; it is only completed when God's enemies are made His footstool.

Please see the following chart and its explanation of how God's eternal plan progresses through time.

Eternal Rulership Through Time (Colossians 1:19–20)

Spiritual Activity	Phase 1 PROOF	Phase 2 RECONSTRUCTION	Phase 3 RECONCILIATION
Spiritual Purpose	Prove God Is Ruler (Deut. 32:8; Isa. 44:6–8; John 18:33–37)	Develop New Rulers (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 3:21)	Establish God’s Eternal Rule (Rev. 21:1—22:5)
Location	Earth (Deut. 32:8–9; Isa. 44:6–8))	Earth (2 Tim. 2:12)	All Creation (Rev. 21:1)
Earthly Time Period	First Day to Christ Seated (Gen. 1:3–5—Acts 2:33–34)	Christ Seated to The Final Judgement (Acts 2:33–34—Rev. 20:15)	All Eternity (Rev. 21:1–5)
Procedure	Disprove Satan’s Rule (Isa. 14:13–14, 44:6–8)	Crushes Satan’s Rule (2 Tim. 2:12; Rom. 16:20)	Carry Out God’s Rule (Rev. 21:1—22:5)
Human Position	Passive Pawns (Gen. 3:8–24; Job 38–41; 1 Chron. 21:1–27; Zech. 3:1–7)	Active Agents (Rom. 16:20; James 4:7–8; 1 Pet. 5:8–9)	Reigning Rulers (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 22:5)
Human Responsibility	Simple Faith (Psalms 119:114, 37:5)	Biblical Faith (Matt. 4:3–10; 2 Tim. 3:16–17, 2:15)	Ruling Faith (Matt. 6:10; Rev. 19:7–8, 22:3–5)

In Phase 1 God provides *proof* to Satan that he can not rule. In Phase 2 God begins *reconstruction* of His future eternal rulership. In Phase 3 God implements His new eternal rulership and completes the *reconciliation* of all creation back to His unchallenged eternal rulership.

Explanation of the Chart

Phase 1

Spiritual Activity: *PROOF*

Spiritual Purpose: To present legal proof to Satan that God is the only one who can rule. This proof is primarily offered to Satan and the rebellious heavenly host of rulers and is done so by example. This example is set forth in God's perfect rulership over Israel (Deuteronomy 32:8; Isaiah 44:6–8).

Therefore under the Old Testament we clearly see God's direct kingship over His subjects, Israel. There was a legal contract drawn up between the King, God, and His subjects, Israel, called "The Law." This contract was a typical contract of that time period between a king and his subjects. It defined the responsibilities of the king and the responsibilities of the subjects.

As Satan and the rebellious angels looked on God consistently fulfilled His responsibilities. He always fulfilled His responsibilities when Israel was obedient or rebellious.

Location: *The Earth.* The above spiritual proof was enacted on this physical earth (Deuteronomy 32:8–9 NET; Isaiah 44:6–8).

Earthly Time Period: From the first day in Genesis until Christ was seated at God's right hand (Genesis 1:3–5; Acts 2:34–35). This means that the entire OT, and the ministry of Christ, was part of this time period of proof (John 18:33–37).

Procedure: Comparing Satan's attempts at rulership with God's perfect rule (Isaiah 13–14, 44:6–8).

Human Position: *Passive Pawns.* Passive Pawns is not a negative term; it simply denotes that the OT saints were not to take direct action against Satan and his forces. This was the King's responsibility, and as His subjects they were to pass this responsibility over to Him and wait for His direct action (Genesis 3:8–24; Job 38–41; 1 Chronicles 21:1–27; Zechariah 3:1–7). This provided a clear picture, and valid proof, to Satan of how only a supreme God can properly rule.

Human Responsibility: To live by *simple faith*. The term *simple faith* is used because God gave Israel very simple rules to live by, and often God even provided visual reinforcement – simple.

There was very little that God’s rules did not cover. When any lack of coverage did happen, God would give the priest direct and clear answers. This made life very simple for Israel (Psalms 119:114, 37:5).

Phase 2

Spiritual Activity: *Reconstruction*

Spiritual Purpose: To develop new heavenly eternal rulers. In Phase 2 God uses humans, rather than angels, to develop new eternal rulers. Therefore God now gives His chosen people the Holy Spirit and uses the trials of this life to develop into future, godly eternal rulers (2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 3:21). Here in Phase 2 God’s chosen people are not from a specific race or nation but from all people of the world.

Location: Earth. This is where new eternal spiritual rulers are being developed (2 Timothy 2:12).

Earthly Time Period: From Christ being seated to the Final Judgment. This starts from the seating of Christ at the right hand of God and runs to the final judgment of all Satan’s followers at the end of time; basically from Acts 2:1 all the way to Revelation 20:22:5).

The Procedure: Crushing Satan’s rule by developing godly character. God offers the opportunity for His chosen to grow in godly character by living a life of biblical faith. This growth crushes Satan’s rule in our personal lives. This process and victory prepares us for future positions of rulership (2 Timothy 2:12; Romans 8:17).

Human Position: *Active Agents*. The chosen of God are given greater spiritual responsibilities than Passive Pawns. For the first time ever, it is commanded to resist Satan rather than calling on God to intervene (James 4:7–8; 1 Peter 5:9). This is an enormous shift in position and responsibilities. Instead of waiting for God’s direct

intervention, we are to be personally responsible in the battle—we are now God’s *active agents*.

Human Responsibility: *Biblical Faith*. The activity by which all our responsibilities are fulfilled is still a life of faith but now faith is no longer a simple faith. Faith is now a stronger and more personally responsible faith. It is a faith strengthened by the indwelling Holy Spirit but enacted by personal volition (2 Timothy 1:13–14). I call it Biblical Faith because all that God wants us to know and do to grow into eternal rulers has been written down in the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16–17; cf Matthew 4:3–10; 2 Timothy 2:15).

Phase 3

Spiritual Activity: *Reconciliation*

Spiritual Purpose: To establish God’s eternal unchallenged rule. God has always been the supreme ruler but Satan has been allowed to challenge God’s system of rulership *at every point* and try to disapprove God’s rule and establish his own system of rule. When this challenge is proven wrong and defeated, God will once again be the supreme unchallenged ruler. At that time Satan will no longer be allowed to make up his own rules, Satan will be forced to obey God³ (Revelation 21:1—22:5).

Location: All creation. The entire creation, heaven and earth will be made perfect and moved back God’s unchallenged rule (Revelation 21:1).

Earthly Time Period: All eternity. This time period extends from Christ moving from the right hand of God to being seated with God, on His throne, and extends throughout all eternity—forever (Revelation 21:1–5).

Procedure: For all to carry out God’s rule by obeying His laws whether they are in heaven or hell (Revelation 21:1–22:5).

Human Position: *Reigning Rulers*. God will place victorious humans in specific

³A good example of this would be of a mass murderer who is caught and imprisoned. Upon his imprisonment he is forced to obey the laws of society, not his own murderous laws.

positions of eternal rulership (2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 22:5). And yes, there are advanced positions of rulership (Zechariah 3:7; Matthew 20:23; Luke 22:30; 1Corinthians 6:3; Revelation 5:10).

Human Responsibility: To live by an *eternal ruling faith*. This appears to be an advanced faith. It is not the simple faith of the passive pawns of the Old Testament saints nor is it the Biblical Faith of the Active Agents of the New Testament saints. Eternal ruling faith appears to be faith that is so well developed that it knows the heart of God and can carry out His will without having to receive direct orders from Him (Matthew 6:10; Revelation 19:7–8).

Chapter 5 CONSISTENCY

While God’s plan has, and is, progressing through time, there are some consistencies that never change.

In the Old Testament, when God was proving to Satan that He and He alone can rule all creation, it was necessary for us to be His obedient subjects, living by a simple godly faith, and relying on His direct protection and intervention. We were to obey Him as we would obey any human king. Because of this and our self-centeredness there were times when, to us, God might have appeared to be an ogre. But now that God has provided more information about His plan of eternal rulership, we understand that God’s kingly actions in the Old Testament were providing proof to Satan that he cannot be king over God’s creation.

Once God had offered all the kingly proof, He deemed necessary, to Satan, He then began to develop His new eternal rulers. Because of this spiritual shift God gave us a new covenant and His relationship with us changed. God is now providing the opportunity to His chosen ones to develop as eternal rulers. Those who develop godly character *to their full potential* will be used in eternal ruling positions. They will carry out His rule throughout all creation for all eternity.

The ultimate goal of Eternal Rulership is not temporary human pleasure and earthly peace and prosperity but the establishment of God’s eternal unchallenged rulership. *Presently we are in training – for eternal reigning.*

THE CONSISTENCIES EXPLAINED

In both the Old Testament time period of “proof” and the New Testament time period of “reconstruction,” there are three consistencies: 1) the core issues of eternal rulership, 2) the three basic elements of godly faith, and 3) the five activities of godly faith.

Core Issues of Eternal Rulership

Control – Who can control all creation: God or Satan?

(Isaiah 44:6–8; John 18:37–38; Revelation 22:5)

Obedience – We are to choose to whom we will be obedient.

(Exodus 20:3; Joshua 24:15)

Reconciliation – God’s plan and our ministry is one of

reconciliation. (Colossians 1:19–20;
2 Corinthians 5:18; Ephesians 3:9–10)

Eternity – The goal of God’s plan is His eternal rulership.

(Colossians 1:19–20; 1 Corinthians 15:24;
Hebrews 11:6; Revelation 22:5)

Three Basic Elements of Godly Faith

Godly faith is required of God’s chosen. Therefore it is imperative to understand how godly faith operates. Godly faith has three elements upon which it stands (Hebrews 11:1). Without these three elements, faith becomes a worldly faith and places us in Satan’s camp (1 Peter 5:9–10).

1. The first element is a heavenly or spiritual perspective—viewing all creation and time from God’s perspective (Colossians 3:1–2; Hebrews 11:1). Without this perspective our faith becomes centered on physical goals and personal desires.
2. The second element is *eternal goals*. God has revealed that the goals of His plan are eternal. Since those goals are our Father’s goals, we are to learn them, and they are to be our goals.

3. The third element is a consistent life of godly faith. Godly faith is not enacted at certain times, in certain places or situations; godly faith is a way of daily life.

The Five Activities of Godly Faith

(What Biblical Faith looks like on a daily basis)

1. **Hear It:** Hear the written Word taught by a called and trained teacher (Romans 10:14, 17; 1 Timothy 4:6; Ephesians 4:11–12; 2 Peter 3:16).
2. **Learn It:** Study what you hear so that you understand it (Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15 AMP).
3. **Own It:** Personalize it, work with and allow the Holy Spirit to write it on your heart (Psalms 119:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 3:18).
4. **Become It:** Apply it in order to grow personally in godly character (Galatians 5:22–23; John 14:21; 1 Corinthians 3:10–13; Ephesians 4:13, 15; Hebrews 5:14).
5. **Direct It:** At this point all the overt godly works commanded of us in the New Testament will naturally flow out of godly character and we direct them toward all creation (Ephesians 4:20–24; Luke 6:45; Romans 12:1–3; Hebrews 5:11–6:1).

Key Verses: Hebrews 11:6; Romans 10:17; Ephesians 2:8–10, 4:20–24; Romans 12:1–3; John 14:21

EPILOGUE

God is not an ogre.

When we have a physical point of view we believe it's all about us and hold the human condition as supreme. We believe God sent Christ to this earth to improve the earth, maybe even make it heaven on earth. And then – we can see God as an ogre, – we will hold the God-human relationship as supreme and we see God's other relationships as minor, – we will only seek to know what God is doing for us.

When we have a spiritual point of view, as commanded by God, we see God's entire eternal plan and how He is working with, and in, all creation. We understand we are here to carry out His plan, no matter how hard it might be. AND we are looking forward to eternity and spending eternity with our wonderful Lord.

When we get it backwards, we turn Christianity into humanism and only then can God appear to be an ogre. But when we get it right, God is the supreme ruler and we are His obedient, Active Agents for His glory.

THE BOTTOM LINE

GOD'S ETERNAL PLAN
is to establish
HIS ETERNAL UNCHALLENGED RULERSHIP

OUR PRESENT PLACE
is to obey and
LEARN HIS WRITTEN WORD – TODAY
LIVE BY HIS WRITTEN WORD – TODAY
and then we will
REIGN WITH THE LIVING WORD –
FOREVER!

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