

A SHORT SUMMARY OF THE PLAN OF GOD IN CHRIST

Jesus Christ came, of the line of David, in accordance with the prophecies spoken by the Spirit through the prophets of old, to fulfill the law and offer Himself up as a sacrifice and an atonement for mankind. Through this sacrifice, peace would be made by His blood, paying the sin debt for all and providing an everlasting way to the Father. From now on, all things would be increasingly summed up into Jesus Christ, until all creation is subject to Him, and all mankind is fully conformed to the divine image.

We read the following in the first chapter of Colossians, concerning Christ:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. ¹⁸ And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

¹⁹ For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, ²⁰ and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. (Colossians 1:15-20)

So then, with peace having been made by His cross, death has been abolished and new life brought to light by His resurrection, and He shall make all alive in due time – with no exceptions.

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, ⁹ who has 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 to us in Christ Jesus before time began, ¹⁰ but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:8-10)

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. ²⁴ Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵ For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. ²⁶ The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For "He has put all things under His feet."^[a] But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. ²⁸ Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all. (1 Corinthians 15:20-28)

This plan of the ages is not a partial or incomplete salvation, as so many have come to believe, but rather a total and infinite victory, that shall result in the Lordship of Christ over every heart, and the confession by every tongue of the same:

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)

This confession shall not be by coercion or hostile pressure, but a joyful and heartfelt expression of praise, and has been guaranteed in solemn and express terms by the Father of all, as the Spirit spoke through Isaiah:

“Look to Me, and be saved,

All you ends of the earth!

For I am God, and there is no other.

²³ I have sworn by Myself;

The word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness,

And shall not return,

That to Me every knee shall bow,

Every tongue shall take an oath.

²⁴ He shall say,

‘Surely in the LORD I have righteousness and strength.

To Him men shall come,

And all shall be ashamed

Who are incensed against Him.

²⁵ In the LORD all the descendants of Israel

Shall be justified, and shall glory.’” (Isaiah 45:22-25)

Now, this mighty plan of God concerning making mankind in His own image has been spread out and mapped over a plurality of ages, and shall find its full and final consummation at the end of the same, when He shall be ‘All in All’. In the present age, He is concerned with producing a firstfruits, a royal priesthood and antitype of the Levitical tribe, that shall serve before Him and minister to creation, and also be displayed as both evidence of the greater harvest to come, and an example of His kindness towards all creation.

Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. (James 1:18)

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:4-7)

This kindness shall be a sure hope for the residue of mankind, seeing as there was nothing to make us differ from one another while dead in trespasses, but all fell short, and the love of God was still bright and perfect towards us all, even in that state of rebellion. The firstfruits shall then serve notice to the whole coming harvest of mankind, that the love and wisdom of God have

triumphed, and the increase of the kingdom is irresistible and sure. For it was never intended that the fullness should come in to Christ in the present age, as many have supposed, but rather that a remnant should be refined into His very image, a metamorphosis that climaxes with the revelation that they are the sons of God, a revelation that shall give renewed hope to a darkened creation, inasmuch as the Father has shown His power in refining a people into the image of His firstborn, the Lord Jesus:

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; ²¹ because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. ²³ Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. (Romans 8:18-23)

This is a sure matter, and has been predestined by the divine wisdom even before the foundation of the world, and cannot be turned back:

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (Romans 8:28-30)

These apprehended ones are transformed by the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, with the veil of the law having been taken away, so that the divine brightness may shine without hindrance:

Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech— ¹³ unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. ¹⁴ But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. ¹⁵ But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. ¹⁶ Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. ¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:12-18)

Now this veil is also the veil of our flesh, which by nature so obscures and covers the light of God, but cannot withstand it at last, nor prevail against the might of His word. This veil must be torn, even as the flesh of Christ was torn to reveal the glory of God, which was paralleled and attested to by the veil of the temple being torn likewise in such a profound manner when the Lord had breathed His last upon the cross. From now on, the mountain of His kingdom shall

grow to fill all things, and He shall remove that spiritually blinding veil completely, so that mankind shall no longer be alienated from the glory of God.

“...And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth....And in the days of these kings *the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed*; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. ⁴⁵ Inasmuch as you saw that *the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands*, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. (Daniel 2:35, 44-45)

And in this mountain

The LORD of hosts will make for all people

A feast of choice pieces,

A feast of wines on the lees,

Of fat things full of marrow,

Of well-refined wines on the lees.

⁷ And He will destroy on this mountain

The surface of the covering cast over all people,

And the veil that is spread over all nations.

⁸ He will swallow up death forever,

And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces;

The rebuke of His people

He will take away from all the earth;

For the LORD has spoken. (Isaiah 25:6-8)

Now with regards to the remainder of mankind, those who shall not share in the first resurrection, there has been much error taught. For tradition has maintained a merciless, fiery end for those who are not born from above in this present age, a tradition that has come about through a misinterpretation of the parables of Christ with regards to *Gehenna*, which has been usually translated as *Hell* but is in fact the real Valley of Hinnom outside the wall of Jerusalem, and was used of judgment in a symbolic and parabolic sense. For this fiery, ceaseless *Hell* has no record of creation in Genesis, nor warning of its existence in the Old Testament. Those Hebrew scriptures warned of death and the grave, which was *Sheol*. Nor do the New Testament epistle writers speak of *Gehenna*, save James, who mentions it but once in writing to the very Jews who would know of the real location and understand the metaphor that was contained in the sayings of Christ. Paul, that anointed minister to the Gentiles and writer of so much of the New Testament, makes no mention of *Gehenna* at all.

Another cause of this error has been through poor translating and understanding of *Aion* and its related forms, which pertain to “age” and “ages”, but have come to mean “forever” and “eternal” in the darkened mind of religious dogma. Thus, where parables speak of corrective judgment that pertains to the ages, tradition has constructed a literal fiery location that shall not cease.

Though these things are so, it is also a grave error, into to which some have also fallen, to imagine that there is no judgment, for indeed the scriptures are replete with references to the

same. Fire is used throughout the Holy Writ as a symbol for the purifying nature of God's righteous judgment, through which all mankind must pass, starting indeed with His own house:

For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1 Peter 4:17)

This judgment is for the refinement, purging, and renewal of all things. In his epistle to the church at Corinth, Paul warns of how the very followers of God may be in danger of the metaphorical flames which engulf and remove vain works and dross of character, *yet in no way so as to be a detriment to their salvation*:

For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:11-15)

This also serves as an example with regards to the rest of mankind, demonstrating how the judgment of God shall burn away the impurity and futility from all things, beginning with His royal priesthood:

He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the Lord An offering in righteousness. (Malachi 3:3)

With this being the very nature and ultimate purpose of divine judgment, we find that the judgments of God are spoken of in a positive way in regards to their end result:

With my soul I have desired You in the night, Yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early; For when Your judgments are in the earth, The inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. (Isaiah 26:9)

Not only this, but the Father has given all judgment to the Son, and the Son shall in turn judge the world through His own body:

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? (1 Corinthians 6:2)

This judgment shall be by the word of God, which is typified by the two edged sword, and this judgement shall be a cause of rejoicing for the saints to which it is committed:

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12)

He (Jesus Christ) had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. (Revelation 1:16)

Let the saints be joyful in glory;
Let them sing aloud on their beds.
⁶ Let the high praises of God be in their mouth,
And a two-edged sword in their hand,
⁷ To execute vengeance on the nations,
And punishments on the peoples;
⁸ To bind their kings with chains,
And their nobles with fetters of iron;
⁹ To execute on them the written judgment—
This honor have all His saints. (Psalm 149: 5-9)

All judgment has the glorious end in view that was planned from the very beginning of creation; that God might create all things through Christ, lower all things into futility, redeem them by the blood of Christ, and mold them into the divine image through the resurrection power of Christ. Thus, all things, having become fragmented and scattered for long ages, are even now being summed up into Jesus Christ:

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace ⁸ which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, ⁹ having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, ¹⁰ 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. (Ephesians 1:7-10)

This good news was committed to the *ekklesia* – the called out ones, who admonished and continue to admonish the rest of humanity to repent – to change their mind and direction – which they shall all do in due season, as each is apprehended of the Lord:

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time (1 Timothy 2:3-6)

For indeed there is set a day when all things shall be restored, as Peter declared to those who marveled at the power of God:

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, ²⁰ and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. (Acts 3:19-21)

The scriptures declare that death itself is the last enemy to be destroyed, which is a twofold proclamation, as both death and enmity are to cease.

The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. (1 Corinthians 15:26)

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:4)

Thus it shall be ultimately seen that, instead of a limited scope of salvation, Jesus Christ’s sacrifice has indeed made atonement for all mankind, and His death on the cross a true, loving substitution that was made effective to the uttermost:

For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; (2 Corinthians 5:15)

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. (1 John 2:1-2)

...and this being so, God is rightly judged to have become the savior of all through His obedient firstborn:

For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. (1 Timothy 4:10)

This being the case, and this grand and wise plan of God being firmly set and eternally decreed, we know that all things are working towards that final consummation and restoration of all things, and that, even as God said:

“Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...” (Genesis 1:26)

...so we shall all say:

...I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness. (Psalm 17:15)

Amen!