

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

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The Bible is not only a fascinating book, it also informs us about God's plan of salvation. Therefore, it is very practical and addresses our questions and concerns: How do we explain the evil that is present in our world? Where do we come from? To where are we heading? What about the future of humanity and planet earth? Our study will give us a bird's eye view of God's plan of salvation. The details will be studied later.

I. The Content of Scripture

The Bible has an interesting structure. Its first two chapters deal with creation (Gen 1-2). The last two chapters focus on the new creation (Rev 21-22). The third chapter from the beginning describes the fall (Gen 3) and the third chapter from the end (Rev 20) the final judgment. Between these chapters of Scripture the great controversy between good and evil takes place. The following chart is a simplified model of the plan of salvation.



However, much more is involved. There is also a cosmic perspective.

II. Unfolding the Plan of Salvation

1. Eternity and the Heavenly Realm

- (1) God is eternal, absolute, almighty, omniscient, love, and triune (Ps 90:2; 139:1-12; Isa 40:28; 45:5 Mt 28:19-20; 1 Tim 6:16; Rev 1:8).
- (2) God knew the future and designed his plan of salvation (1 Pet 1:20).
- (3) God created angels (Col 1:16).
- (4) His goal was harmony, happiness, and eternal life for all his created beings (Gen 1-2 and Rev 21-22, see, 2 Pet 3:9).

2. The Beginning of the Sin Problem

(1) The angel Lucifer, Satan, who questioned God's love and justice, wanted to be like God. He spread his ideas among the angelic beings (Eze 28:11-19; Isa 14:13-14; Satan is portrayed behind the kings of Tyre and Babylon.)

(2) Satan, who still had access to heaven (Job 1:6) together with the angels who followed his rebellion, is found on earth (Rev 12:3-4). God did not destroy him immediately. Had he done so, Satan's accusations would have lived on, and the sin problem would not have been solved once and for all. God allowed Satan's principles to flourish while at the same time revealing his own character and the principles of his own government. Since then the great controversy between good and evil rages. God is accused. In justifying himself God through his plan of salvation tries to win the undivided allegiance and love of the created beings not only on earth, but also in the universe, while granting them free will to choose.

(3) God created this earth (Gen 1-2).

(4) The fall of humanity happened (Gen 2:13; 3). Since then all human beings are affected by sin and therefore also by death.

(5) God announced His plan of salvation (Gen 3:15), which included the birth of the Messiah, who would rescue humans from eternal death by dying in their place. Satan tried to counteract God's initiative.

3. The Time of the Patriarchs

(1) Cain murdered his godly brother Abel, who chose to worship God the way the Lord wanted it and offered the sacrifice demanded by him, thus indicating his dependence on God's grace. Seth replaced Abel. His offspring represents the line of the believers (Gen 4:1-16, 25-26; 5:1-32).

(2) After several centuries humanity was totally depraved with the exception of Noah and his family. God brought the flood upon earth but saved Noah and his family (Gen 6-8).

(3) Some time after the flood, humanity again fell away from God. The tower of Babel was built. God confused the common language. Then Abraham was called by God (Gen 11; 12:1-7).

(4) Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son Isaac, which is a pointer to what would happen to God and his Son. Whereas the life of Isaac was spared, centuries later Jesus had to die for humanity (Gen 22:1-19).

4. The Time of Israel

(1) Jacob, Abraham's grandson, was renamed as Israel. His twelve sons became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel (Gen 32:29; 49:1-28).

(2) God's elected people were liberated from Egyptian slavery (Exod 12:29-51).

(3) God's law was put into writing. The earthly sanctuary was erected. The sanctuary was the place where God wanted to meet his people. In a symbolic way the services depicted part of God's plan of salvation. The sacrificial system pointed to the sacrifice of the Messiah, who would die for humanity. The priesthood pointed to the heavenly priesthood of the Messiah (Exod 20-23; 25-31).

(4) In spite of apostasy, Israel entered the promised land. The period of the judges, and afterwards the period of the kings followed (Jos 3, Judges 1-21; 1 Sam 9:15-10:16; 2 Sam 5:1-5; 1 Kings 1).

(5) The kingdom was divided into two: Israel with ten tribes in the north and Judah with two tribes in the South (1 Kings 12)

(6) The time of the kings is also the time of major prophets. God tried to correct idolatry and other problems. But finally the northern kingdom went into Assyrian exile (2 Kings 17). About a century and a half later Judah was exiled to Babylon (2 Kings 24-25).

(7) After the return from the Babylon exile Judah lived under the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans (Ezra, Nehemiah, several Minor Prophets).

5. New Testament Times

(1) God's love became very tangible when his Son was born as a human being (Luke 2:1-21). Jesus is the Messiah. He lived and labored mainly among his people (Acts 10:38; Matt 4:17). He died in our place (Isa 53; Matt 27:31-56; Rom 5:6-8; 2 Cor 5:21). He was raised from the dead (Matt 28:1-4). First, Satan attempted to kill Jesus when he still was little (Matt 2:13-23). Later he tempted him (Matt 4:1-13). Then, he tried to hinder him from taking our sins upon himself and dying in our place (Matt 26:39, 42, 44). In the end Satan became the murderer of the Son of God. God is being justified and Satan's accusations were proven false. He was cast out of heaven permanently (John 12:31; Rev 12:7-11). What happens on this earth has become a spectacle to the heavenly world (1 Cor 4:9).

(2) Jesus created his church (Matt 16:18; 18:17), which was built on him as the cornerstone and on the foundation of the apostles (Eph 2:19-21) and would consist of Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:11-22). This church received the task to preach the gospel to the entire world (Mark 16:15-16).

6. Present and Future

(1) Since his ascension Jesus serves as our mediator and High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. Through him we have access to God the Father (Heb 1:17-18; 4:14-16).

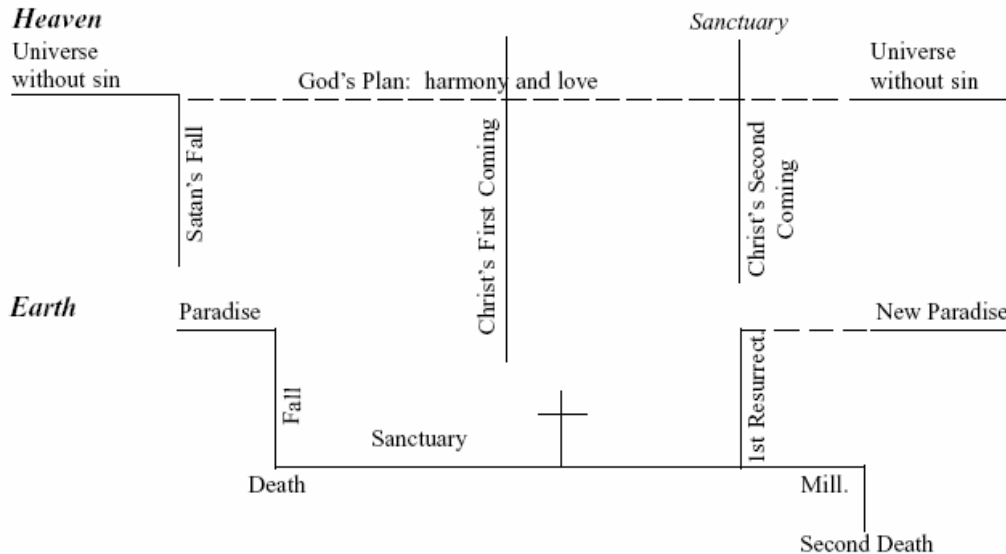
(2) Before his second coming a judgment for the believers in Christ takes place in heaven. While God's actions and decisions are being justified, also the cases of those are determined who profess to follow Christ. At the Second Coming a separation of humanity takes place, which must be determined before that particular event (Dan 7; 1 Pet 4:17).

(3) At Christ's Second Coming the true believers will be raised and together with the living saints transformed. They will be taken where Jesus is (Matt 24:27-31; 1Thess 4:13,16).

(4) During a time period of one thousand years judgment will be held in heaven and the cases of the lost will be studied. At the end of the Millennium the second resurrection will take place. Those who are opposed to God will hear their verdict. The sentences will be executed. Those who are not saved will be put to death (Rev 20).

(5) God will create a wonderful new heaven and a new earth without any signs of sin and death (Rev 21-22).

(6) God's plan of salvation will be completed. The sin problem will be solved forever. There will be no evil, but harmony and love toward God and each other voluntarily and forever.



We are invited to accept God's gracious gift of salvation and experience fellowship with God and eternal life on a new earth.