

CHAPTER FOUR

TIMELINE OF GOD'S REDEMPTIVE PLAN

Introduction

Why study prophecy? In **Matthew 4:4 (Deuteronomy 8:3c)**, our Lord Jesus Christ said that man shall live by *every word* that proceeds from the mouth of God. The entire Word of God centers on Christ, His return and the establishment of His kingdom. The prophecies from the Old and New Testament (a detailed view in the Book of **Revelation**), reveals God's ultimate plan and His perfect will for man. What could be more important?

“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it, for the time is near.” (Revelation 1:3)

God says that individuals who study, understand and retain prophecy will be blessed. It is by and through the study of prophecy that one can realize that the time of His return is near and in turn be prepared. In this, one will be blessed with an abundant entrance into the kingdom of the heavens.

And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, than no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came from the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:19-21)

Prophecy in the Word will continue to point to the source of all truth — Christ — until He returns in glory. Prophecy is the Light which God has given us as a guide in this time of darkness. When Jesus walked the earth, He spoke repeatedly of His second coming and His future Millennial kingdom. We see this in all four of the Gospels. Therefore,

I believe this is of *great* importance for Christians to know, otherwise Christ would not have mentioned it *so many times*.

One reason to study prophecy is so that we can know the approximate time period of our Lord's return and in turn watch and be ready for His appearing. Christ loves us so much that He gave His Spirit and His Word, even sacrificed Himself for us, so that we will enter into the kingdom which He has prepared for those who love Him and long for His return. Although we will not know the exact day and hour of His return, we are given ample warning of the proximity of the close of this age to let us know that His return is near.

Therefore, when one says he is not interested in prophecy or in the Lord's return he is acknowledging that he has little interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. And when one says he does not believe in the Lord's return he is *denying* the Word of God. Because of the destructive work of the leaven throughout this dispensation, Satan has been successful in keeping the Word of the kingdom (the gospel of glory) from *ever being mentioned* in the Church. Many Churches today preach continually on salvation of the spirit (eternal salvation), of eternal damnation, baptisms, church programs, *of laying on hands, of the resurrection of the dead (Hebrews 6:1, 2)* and then stop there. The future Millennial kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is completely neglected.

One cannot preach the gospel and leave out half of the good news! We must give the *whole counsel* of God, both the gospel of grace and the gospel of glory. Leaving out the gospel of glory will not only produce much confusion in the Scriptures, but it will also exclude the Christian's purpose and hope.

At Christ's great commission, He came to His disciples (which extends to all Christians) and spoke to them, saying,

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I

have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19)

This is a commandment to *all* servants of God, then and now. Making disciples involves three steps:

- 1) Ministering the gospel of Christ to all peoples of all nations,
- 2) Baptizing them (an acknowledgment of the birth from above)
- 3) Teaching them to observe *all things* that Jesus had taught and commanded.

What did Jesus teach and command? Primarily, He taught "the gospel of the kingdom" (**Matthew 4:23; Acts 1:1-3**). In the Book of **Matthew** alone, the word "kingdom" appears over forty times. Christians are *commanded* to make disciples of other Christians, which involves teaching them all things concerning His coming kingdom and how to participate in it. In **Amos 3:7**, Scripture says:

"Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets."

This means that God has revealed all prophecy to the Old Testament prophets, His servants. Through the study of prophecy in His Word we will know all truth, and know His plan and purpose for the ages.

Is this world coming to an end? What does the future hold? What is going to happen next? There is order in the plans and purposes of God; and Scripture seems to point to the next prophetic event --- the removal of the Church.

In the beginning God created two realms, *the heavens and the earth*. (**Genesis 1:1**). And God rules from the heavens over the earth. (**Psalms 103:19-22**). The phrase, "*the heavens rule*" in **Daniel 4:26** refer to God's rule over His entire kingdom and to the rule of messianic angels whom He has placed over provinces in His kingdom (**Psalms 103:20-22; Ephesians 2:2; 6:12**). And the angel in which God anointed as His cherub to rule under Him was Lucifer (after his fall, he is known as "Satan"), a position that presently

continues to be occupied by him over the province in which man resides (**Job 1:6; 2:1; Isaiah 14:13; Ezekiel 28:14**) until he is brought down in the future. God did not plan for angels to rule forever, this was God's plan for man, "the first man, the Last Man -- the first Adam, the Last Adam." (**1 Corinthians 15:45-47**). This plan of government *from the heavens over the earth* was designed for Christ and His co-heirs, Christ being the Head, the King of kings and God's firstborn begotten Son. (**Hebrews 1:5, 6; Psalms 2:7; 2 Samuel 7:14; John 3:16**) "Sonship" indicates *rulership*; only "sons" can occupy regal positions in God's kingdom and only "sons" have rights to an inheritance – as with Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, Joseph and his brothers, etc.)

These two realms (the heavens and the earth) formed two spheres within a theocracy in which man was to ultimately rule. Man had been created in the beginning to rule the earth in the stead of the incumbent ruler, Satan (**Genesis 1:26-28**); and Satan's rule at that time, which continues today, was from *a heavenly sphere over the earth*. (**Ephesians 6:12**) Thus, in order for man/Man to occupy the position created for him/Him, he/He will have to reside in both realms of the kingdom – *heavenly and earthly*.

Since the fall of Adam, God's redemptive plan for man has been in effect. God will redeem His people back to the position for which they were originally created, but they have to desire it and work for it. Man has a choice. We should take into account what happened to Jacob (Brave Heart) and the unprofitable servant. Each received their just payment for their decision and service to the Lord. Consider what your decision is for the Lord. Consider that Day when you will stand face to face with our Lord Jesus Christ.

As one looks at the structure of the Bible, it is clear to see that it has a beginning and an end, with different time periods and dispensations (**Ephesians 1:10; 3:2**). The word *dispensation* is the Greek word *oikonomia* (Strong's #G3622) meaning "administration (of a household); specifically an economy or stewardship." *A dispensation is an administration or a stewardship within a period of time during which God is allowing man to be tested in order to determine his ability to rule the earth.*

Within each dispensation or stewardship (meaning *house management*), God governed His people differently. For example, God's dealings with the Jews are very different from His dealings with the Gentiles and both of these are dealt with differently than the Church. For instance, the laws and orders of worship for the Jews are separate and distinct and do not apply to the Church. Also, God's dealings with man after Pentecost, with the gift of the Spirit, are different from His dealings with man before Pentecost. Therefore, according to the Scriptures, the Lord administered different messages to different groups (Jews, Gentiles and Christians) in three periods of time.

Scripture divides the human race into three separate and distinct groups of individuals, forming three creations – Jews, Gentiles, and the Church, i.e. Christians. (**1 Corinthians 10:32**) Within these three creative acts of God, there are three dispensations consisting of 2000 years each which complete 6,000 years of the history of man known as Man's Day, from Adam to the removal of the Church. And within these three dispensations covering 6,000 years of Man's Day, it completes *one age*.

The word *age* is the Greek word *aion* (Strong's #G165) meaning "course, duration of time — past, present or future; by implication the *world* — the ages." Scripture refers to only two periods of time or two ages that exist and it is presented within the six days of work followed by a seventh day of rest in **Genesis 1:1-2:3**. One age covers a period of six thousand years [Man's Day] and the other age covers a period of one thousand years [the Lord's Day], the Messianic Era. Within these two ages covering a span of 7000 years, there are four dispensations.

The first dispensation began with the creation of Adam and ended with the tower of Babel. Due to Adam's fall, man proved unfit to exercise dominion, and this dispensation ended in judgment, first with Adam & Eve being cast out of the Garden and then again with the descendants of Noah being scattered abroad over the face of the earth when they began to build the tower of Babel for their own

glory, without the leadership of God. This dispensation involved God's dealings with all of mankind which ended in judgment.

After the fall of Adam, a division could be looked upon through viewing man as either saved or unsaved, for the first 2,000 years of human history. There was simply man in his fallen state (saved or unsaved) belonging to one creation, the only one that existed. But then, a new beginning is seen in the experiences of Noah immediately following the flood (**Genesis 9:1-13**), and this new beginning is dealt with more fully in the subsequent experiences of Abraham. (**Genesis 11:26-25:8**).

Each dispensation that followed thereafter ended in judgment. It is prophesied in the Scriptures that this current dispensation in which we live will end in judgment as well. And this judgment, for Israel and the Gentiles, will be composed of seven years of Tribulation on earth, such as never before been seen. Immediately before this time of trouble on earth, Christians will be removed to face Christ at His judgment seat in heaven.

The second dispensation, known as the dispensation of law, began with a different approach regarding God's dealings with man for his redemption. God chose one individual, Abraham, to be the one in whom "*a special people*" (**Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 26:18; Psalm 135:4**) would form and would be favored with blessings. In turn, they were to be a blessing to all mankind. First, they would be the channel through which our Lord Jesus Christ would come (**2 Samuel 7:12, 13**). Second, they would be given the Word of God (**Romans 3:1, 2**). Third, they were to be God's witnesses to the ends of the earth (**Isaiah 43:9**).

Abraham obeyed God when he was called to leave Ur of the Chaldeans and go into another land, the land of Canaan "*which he would receive as an inheritance*" (**Genesis 11:31-12:5; 13:14-17; 15:18-21**). From the land of his birth He "*went out, not knowing where he was going,*" dwelling "*in tents with Isaac and Jacob [as pilgrims, yet to receive the inheritance (Genesis 37:1; Exodus 6:4)], the heirs with him of the same promise.*" And he "*looked for a*

city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:8-10).

Abraham was called to travel from one land to another, and he was to receive the land to which he had been called *for an inheritance*. For Abraham, the call was from one *earthly land* to another *earthly land*.

[But many Old Testament saints understood that there were two realms within an inheritance to be realized by Abraham and his seed — both *an earthly* and a *heavenly*. And many of these individuals, including Abraham, looked beyond *the earthly land* to *the heavenly* (**Hebrews 11:12-16**).]

The promise given to Abraham can be seen in **Genesis 22:17, 18**:

That in blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.

In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.

In **Genesis 22:17, 18**, God refers to Abraham’s descendants being looked upon in two realms: *as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore* (heavenly and earthly). The phrase *possessing the gate* refers to the manner in which the control of affairs would be taken from the enemy. It is through a control of this nature in both realms, by the seed of Abraham, that the nations of the earth can (and will) be blessed (**Genesis 12:1-3**).

The nation of Israel (Jews) originated with Abraham, the father of the nation. From the birth of Abraham’s son, Isaac, the Old Testament centers on one nation – the nation descending from Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob’s twelve sons. Through Jacob, who became Israel, God created the existence of this special group known as the Jews. This special people are God’s firstborn sons (**Exodus 4:22**).

And despite the Jews (Israel) continued disobedience towards God, they will *always* remain God's firstborn sons. God performed a special creative act in Abraham's grandson, Jacob. Through Jacob's descendants, God would bring His plans and purposes to pass. From Jacob's twelve sons sprang the twelve tribes of Israel, forming the nation through which God gave man the Redeemer, the written Word of God, and through which all blessings for mankind flow.

After the creation of Israel, the Gentiles came into existence, who would make up mankind from those who failed God before the call of Abraham. After the call of Abraham, they were considered "[spiritually] *dead in trespasses and sin,*" and were pagans, worshipping idols and false gods. The Gentiles were made up of those outside the seed of Abraham. Therefore, *Israel was chosen by God to be His own special people and to witness to the Gentiles.*

However, because of Israel's disobedience and unbelief, they failed in being God's witness to the Gentiles. Israel, for a time and to an extent, realized the earthly portion of this kingdom during Old Testament days. But because of the nation's continued disobedience, the theocracy was eventually brought to an end.

When Christ came the first time, He offered the heavenly sphere of the kingdom — the kingdom of the heavens (**Matthew 4:17; 5:12; 10:7; 13:24, 31, 52**) — to the nation of Israel. This offer was contingent on Israel's *national* repentance (a requirement due to the nation's disobedience through centuries of time, until that time [a condition that continues to exist during the present time], described in **Isaiah 1:4, 5** as "*the whole head is sick*"). However, the Jewish people, in keeping with their past disobedience, rejected the offer and their Messiah, resulting in the crucifixion of the Lord (**Matthew 16:21; 20:17-19; 23:34-39; 26:3-5, 14; Luke 4:28-30; John 19:10-15; 1 Thessalonians 2:14, 15; Acts 2:22-24, 36; 3:12-15**).

In early 63 A.D., God set aside His dealings with Israel and removed the offer of the heavenly kingdom from them. Thirty-seven years following Calvary, in 70 A.D., God punished Israel with the destruction of Jerusalem. This time period, which involved God's dealings with the Jews, lasted nearly 2,000 years — shy of seven

years, which will be dealt with in the future during the seven year Tribulation, a time of severe judgment.

The third dispensation opened with the creation of the “*one new man in Christ*,” neither Jew nor Gentile, but the two forming the Church. This third and last special creative act of God within the human race is the Church of God (Christians). And this creation, rather than occurring in the *physical* realm, occurred in the *spiritual* realm. The former two creations (Jew and Gentile) could be passed through one’s progeny, but not so with the third creation (Christian). Within God’s plans and purposes, all spiritual blessings for mankind were to be realized through Abraham and his seed. Israel was set aside temporarily and God gave the responsibility to the Church to be ministers of God’s Word to the ends of the earth. God called into existence an entirely *new creation* “*in Christ*,” who would be “*Abraham’s seed* [because of an individual’s positional standing ‘*in Christ*,’ who is Abraham’s Seed], *and heirs according to the promise*” (**Galatians 3:26-29; 6:15; Ephesians 2:10; 4:24; 2 Corinthians 5:17**). And God is presently offering to this *new creation* “*in Christ*” that which was taken from Israel—the heavenly land, not the earthly land. Israel’s covenant of the earthly land will never change. They will possess and rule from their land, Jerusalem --- forever. The remnant of Israel will one day inherit their earthly promise and those within the Church, who prove to be faithful, will inherit the heavenly promise.

Israel’s rejection of the proffered heavenly kingdom was the reason for a third creation, occupying a position “*in Christ*” as Christ’s body and Christ as the Head of the body (**Ephesians 1:22, 23**).

This was something not possible for Israel, for Israel was God’s wife (**Jeremiah 2:20; 3:1-8, 14-20; Ezekiel 16; Hosea 1:2; 4:15**) and did not comprise Christ’s body. The existence of the *one new man* “*in Christ*” consisted of both *Abraham’s seed* and *Christ’s body*, a body of believers to be taken from His body as His bride (**Ephesians 5:22-32; Revelation 19:7**) who is to co-reign with Him from the heavenly sphere of the kingdom. (**Ephesians 2:6, 7; Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 3:1; 11:16; 1 Peter 1:4**). And this new

creation is neither Jew nor Gentile, both being removed and placed in a new spiritual identity (**Galatians 3:26-29**). The Jew or Gentile, upon believing in Christ, passes *from death unto life*, allowing him to occupy a positional standing in Christ as God's firstborn son. Within this realm, he is no longer associated with his prior creation, whether Jew or Gentile (**2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10; Galatians 3:26-28**).

If one was a Jew prior to the time of belief, he ceased to be a Jew. He relinquished his national identity and became a *new creation* "in Christ." "Old things have passed away, behold all things have become new" (**2 Corinthians 5:17c**). The same thing pertains if he were a Gentile prior to the time of belief. He also relinquished his national identity and became a *new creation* "in Christ," a Christian.

A Jew, relinquishing his national identity, relinquishes his place among a nation promised to one day realize *earthly* promises and blessings (**Isaiah 9:6**). But, by doing so, he comes into possession of a "higher calling." He now finds himself part of a nation who is promised to one day realize *heavenly* promises and blessings (**1 Peter 1:3-9; 2:9, 10**). But this does not dispose of national Israel. Israel will *always* be God's firstborn son. Jews who remain in unbelief make up the nation of Israel. God will be deal with them again in the future and when Christ returns, the nation as a whole will be restored. God will never do away with any of His firstborn sons: Christ, Israel and the Church! (**Romans 11:29**)

A Gentile, relinquishing his national identity, relinquishes his place among the nations who are without God, without hope and blessings (**Ephesians 2:12; 3:5, 6**).

Therefore, the matter surrounding the new creation "in Christ" is *spiritual* and the matter surrounding the prior two creations (in Adam, in Jacob) is *physical* (natural). The first two creations can be passed from one generation to the next via the natural birth, but the latter creation cannot – it is spiritual and must be experienced upon one's belief on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And upon belief on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit breathing life into the person who was spiritually dead and bringing about the new creation, results in *no change in the physical*. An example can be seen with Paul, *a new creation in Christ*, could also refer to himself as “a Jew” (by birth—**Acts 21:39**), and “a Hebrew” (**Philippians 3:5**). His identity “in Christ” was *spiritual* and his identity as “a Jew” had to do with his identity outside of Christ, associating him with that which was natural.

There are numerous examples in Scripture that differentiate Israel, Gentiles and the Church:

1. God created Israel in Jacob (**Isaiah 43:1**)
2. God created the Gentiles (those outside of the seed of Abraham) after the creation of Israel, referred to in **Ephesians 2:12**
3. God created the Church, the new man “in Christ”(neither Jew nor Greek). (**Ephesians 2:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17**)

These three creations have and always will be differentiated throughout the ages. They were created so that God’s plans and purposes would be fulfilled.

God deals with Christians alone *during the present dispensation, from Pentecost to the rapture*. Christians (Church), forming the “*new creation*” in Christ, **did not** exist prior to Jesus first coming (otherwise it would not be a “new” creation); and when this dispensation is over (which will occur when the Spirit completes His search for a bride for God’s Son), Christians (all) will be removed. God can (and will) then turn back prior to Pentecost with Israel and complete His dealings with this nation, a period of seven years (Daniel’s unfulfilled 70th Week), the Tribulation period, which will bring down Gentile world power and bring Israel to a state of repentance.

Presently, Israel remains in a state of blindness until Christ returns and restores them to their land. Israel in that future Day will be at the “*head of the nations*” as a theocracy, ruling and reigning from their earthly land, a land that God had initially promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Faithful Christians, along with faithful Old Testament saints and Tribulation saints, will rule and reign from the heavenly sphere of the kingdom.

At present, we are living in the third dispensation, and God says that it will end in judgment as well. This is *the dispensation of the fullness of the times* (**Ephesians 1:10**). The close of this dispensation will be seen with the removal of the Church to the judgment seat of Christ in heaven. Our Most High God has revealed in His Word what is to come --- prophecy that is certain to be realized. Therefore, we must turn our attention to the Word of God. Biblical prophecy is the only reliable source connecting the past to the future. And within prophecy, it is revealed numerous times that we are most assuredly living in the last days. A period of 2,000 years since Pentecost, and three dispensations totaling 6,000 years is coming to pass.

The fourth dispensation will be the Messianic Era, which will last for a period of one thousand years and involves God dealing with all three groups: Jews, Gentiles and the Church as a whole. God will give the kingdom to His Son, and He will begin His rule and reign along with His elect over the earth. God has called both Jesus and Israel His firstborn, One begotten and one adopted. And through Christ, the Church (more specifically, the overcomers) is considered His firstborn through adoption, but not made manifest until the judgment seat of Christ.

Jesus as begotten Firstborn:

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. (Romans 8:29) [See also John 1:14 – “begotten”]

Israel as adopted firstborn:

*Thus says the Lord, "Israel is My son, My firstborn."
(Exodus 4:22)*

Church as adopted firstborn:

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. (Hebrews 12:22-24)

These three firstborn sons of God will rule during the future Messianic Era and throughout the Eternal Ages. Israel will rule on the earth (**2 Samuel 7; Isaiah 43:5, 6; Jeremiah 31:1-14; Ezekiel 37:12-14; Chapter 40; Revelation 5:10**) and Christians will rule from the heavens (**John 14:1-4; Ephesians 1:10; Philippians 3:14, 20; Colossians 1:5; 3:1, 2; Hebrews 11:13-16; 12:24; 1 Peter 1:4-9; Revelation 2:7, 3:12, 21**). Christ will rule and reign from both spheres of the kingdom: He will sit in the heavenly throne with His bride—those selected from the Church (**Ephesians 5:22-33; Revelation 3:21, 22-4:5; 19:6-9**) and He will rule and reign from David's earthly throne in Jerusalem with God's wife, Israel (**2 Samuel 7; Jeremiah 3:14; Isaiah 9:6**). Therefore, Christ, being omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent, will reign from both spheres of the kingdom—the earthly Mount Zion and Jerusalem (**Joel 2:32**) and the heavenly Mount Zion and Jerusalem (**Hebrews 12:22**). And this is not difficult for our God to do, the One who created the worlds (ages), the heavens and the earth, angels, man and everything in it.

Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, "Behold I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?" (Jeremiah 32:26, 27)