# The Structure of Scripture

## A Demonstration of the Precision of God's Word

God's plan of the ages, laid open: how every loss in Genesis is answered in Revelation, step by step and in reverse order, with the Church of God at the centre.

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## Anchor Passage

> **Isaiah 46:10** *Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:*
>
> **Acts 3:21** *Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.*

# Introduction

## A. A Book with a Beginning and an End

Most Christians read the Bible a passage at a time. That is a good way to read it, and it is how most of us were taught. But the Bible is also one book, and it has a shape. It opens with God creating the heavens and the earth, a garden with a tree of life in it, and a man walking with God. It closes with a new heaven and a new earth, a river and a tree of life, and God dwelling with men. The first pages and the last pages answer each other.

That is not an accident. God says of Himself that He declares **"the end from the beginning" (Isaiah 46:10)**. Peter, preaching in the temple, spoke of **"the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21)**. A *restitution* is a putting back: the restoring of what was lost. If God planned the restoring from the beginning, we should expect to find that what was lost in the opening chapters of the Bible is put back, piece by piece, in its closing chapters.

This study lays out that plan. It is built on an outline first published by Dr. E. W. Bullinger (1837–1913) in his book *The Apocalypse*, under the heading "The Plan of the Ages." In this library's revised edition of that book the outline was corrected at three points, and that corrected outline is the one used here (Appendix A shows both).

*In short: the Bible's end answers its beginning, and this study shows how, step by step.*

**Weighing it: Narrative — introduces the subject; carries no weight on any contested claim by itself.**

## B. Why Not Call It a "Dispensational Plan"?

Bullinger called his outline "The Dispensational Plan of the Bible." The word *dispensation* is the King James rendering of the Greek *oikonomia*, the management of a household; the Apostle Paul uses it for God's ordering of the ages in **"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him" (Ephesians 1:10)**. It is a good word. But most readers today do not know it, and many who do have heard it attached to schemes they distrust. So this study uses plainer words: *the ages of time*, and *God's plan of the ages*. The idea is the same: God deals with mankind in stretches of time, each with its own terms, and all of them together serve one purpose.

*In short: "dispensation" means God's management of the ages; this study simply says "the ages of time."*

**Weighing it: Method, not argument — explains the choice of words.**

## C. The Claims This Study Makes

The study makes four claims, and the weighing notes refer to them by name.

- **The Shape claim.** The history the Bible records, from creation to the new creation, is arranged so that its second half answers its first half in reverse order, like the two sides of a mirror.
- **The Pairs claim.** Each of the eight pairs set out in Chapter 2 is a real correspondence that Scripture itself supports, not a match forced onto it.
- **The Centre claim.** At the centre of the plan stands the Church of God, called out from the day of Pentecost while the kingdom was offered to Israel and refused.
- **The Lesson claim.** The plan teaches that no created being, angel or man, nation or chosen nation, has been able to stand on its own; whatever stands, stands by God's grace.

*In short: four claims, Shape, Pairs, Centre and Lesson, are tested in the chapters that follow.*

**Weighing it: Method, not argument — names the claims so that every note can say which one it bears on.**

## D. The Strongest Case on the Other Side

Before anything is argued, here is the best case against this study, put as a careful objector would put it.

- **First,** Scripture never draws this outline. No verse says "the history of the world is an introversion." The outline is a reader's construction.
- **Second,** almost any long story can be made to look symmetrical by choosing which events to set side by side. A clever reader could build a different mirror out of the same material.
- **Third,** some pairs rest on prophecy whose timing is disputed: the binding of Satan, the thousand years, the restoring of Israel. Those who read Revelation 20 differently will not accept those members as stated.
- **Fourth,** the centre pair is awkward. The kingdom was offered to Israel through the Acts at the same time as the Church of God was being called out from Pentecost, so the two members overlap in time rather than following one another.
- **Fifth,** Bullinger himself built the original outline on two positions this library does not hold: the Gap Theory, and an Acts 28 beginning for the Church. If the outline needed correcting at two load-bearing points, perhaps it is not as sure as it looks.

Each of these objections is answered where it arises, and the answers are weighed honestly. Some are granted.

*In short: the plan is a reader's outline, and this study says so; the question is whether Scripture's own links support it.*

**Weighing it: Opposing case, stated.**

## E. How to Read the Weighing Notes

Every section ends with a short note in bold that begins "Weighing it." Its first words tell you how strong the point is, and which way it points. Five levels are used:

- **Direct statement** — Scripture says it in so many words.
- **Strong inference** — it follows closely from what Scripture says; the other reading has to strain against the text.
- **Reasonable inference** — the more natural reading, but a careful reader could take it otherwise.
- **Corroboration only** — it fits this study, but would fit the other side about as well.
- **Neutral** — commonly cited, but settles nothing.

After the bold line comes what the other side can fairly answer. Appendix B gathers every note into one table.

*In short: the bold line gives the strength and the direction; the sentence after it gives the other side its due.*

**Weighing it: Method, not argument.**

# Chapter 1 — How to Read a Structure

## A. Scripture Repeats Itself on Purpose

Hebrew writers did not use paragraphs, headings and bullet points. They arranged their thoughts by repetition. A subject is stated, other subjects follow, and then the first subject returns, so that the reader feels the arrangement even without seeing it. Scholars call the result the *structure* of a passage. Bullinger spent much of his life tracing these structures, and he found them in every book of the Bible.

A structure is made of *members*, each a short stretch of text with its own subject. Members are labeled with letters so they can be compared. When a member's subject returns later, the returning member gets the same letter with a mark after it (A and A′, read "A prime"). The two are said to *correspond*: the second answers the first, by repeating it, completing it, or reversing it.

*In short: a structure is the pattern made when subjects return, and the returning subjects correspond.*

**Weighing it: Method, not argument.**

## B. Two Kinds of Pattern

There are two simple patterns. In an *alternation*, subjects take turns: A, B, A′, B′. In an *introversion*, they come back in reverse order: A, B, C, C′, B′, A′, like a set of nesting boxes. The outermost members frame the whole, and the innermost members stand at the heart of it.

Isaiah gives a clear introversion in one verse, as the Lord describes what the people's hardness of heart would bring on them:

> **Isaiah 6:10** *Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.*

The order is *heart*, *ears*, *eyes*; then *eyes*, *ears*, *heart*. The verse turns on its middle, and the sense is plain: the hardening that begins in the heart closes the ears and the eyes, and only when the eyes and ears are opened again can the heart understand. The shape carries part of the meaning.

*In short: an introversion runs out and comes back, and its middle is the turning point.*

**Weighing it: Direct statement — the order heart–ears–eyes–eyes–ears–heart is in the verse as written.** No reader disputes the order; only how much weight to give it.

## C. Why the Shape Matters

Bullinger's rule was that the structure of a passage shows its *scope*, that is, what the passage is about; and the scope decides how its words are to be read. If a passage is built as an introversion, its first and last members explain each other, and its centre is where the emphasis lies.

The same rule can be applied to the whole Bible. If the history it records is built as one great introversion, then its first chapters and its last chapters explain each other, and whatever stands at the centre is the turning point of the whole.

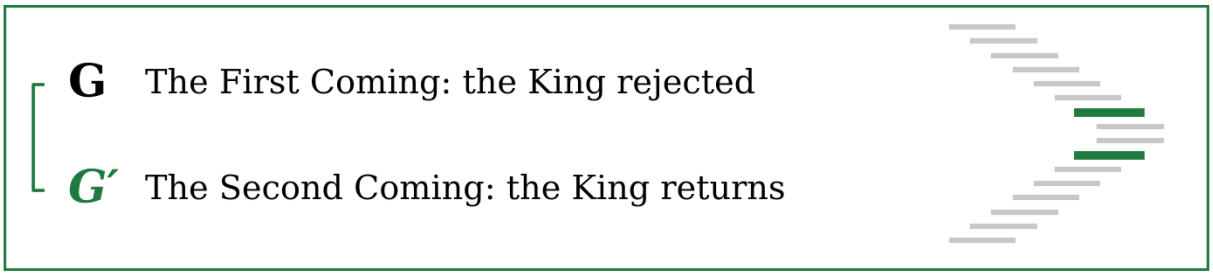
*In short: in a structure, matching members explain each other, and the centre carries the weight.*

**Weighing it: Reasonable inference — the rule is well tested in single passages; applying it to the whole Bible is this study's step, and must be proved pair by pair.** The other side can fairly answer that a pattern found in single verses does not prove that a pattern of the same kind governs a story told across sixty-six books. That is why the chapters below test each pair on its own evidence.

# Chapter 2 — The Plan as a Whole

## A. How to Use the Pictures in This Study

Each of the chapters that follow, from Chapter 3 to Chapter 10, opens with a small picture like the one below. It shows the two members of one pair: the first, on the way down, in black; its partner, on the way back, in green and marked with the sign ´. At the right of each picture is a small map of the whole plan, with the pair being studied picked out in green, so that you can always see where you are.



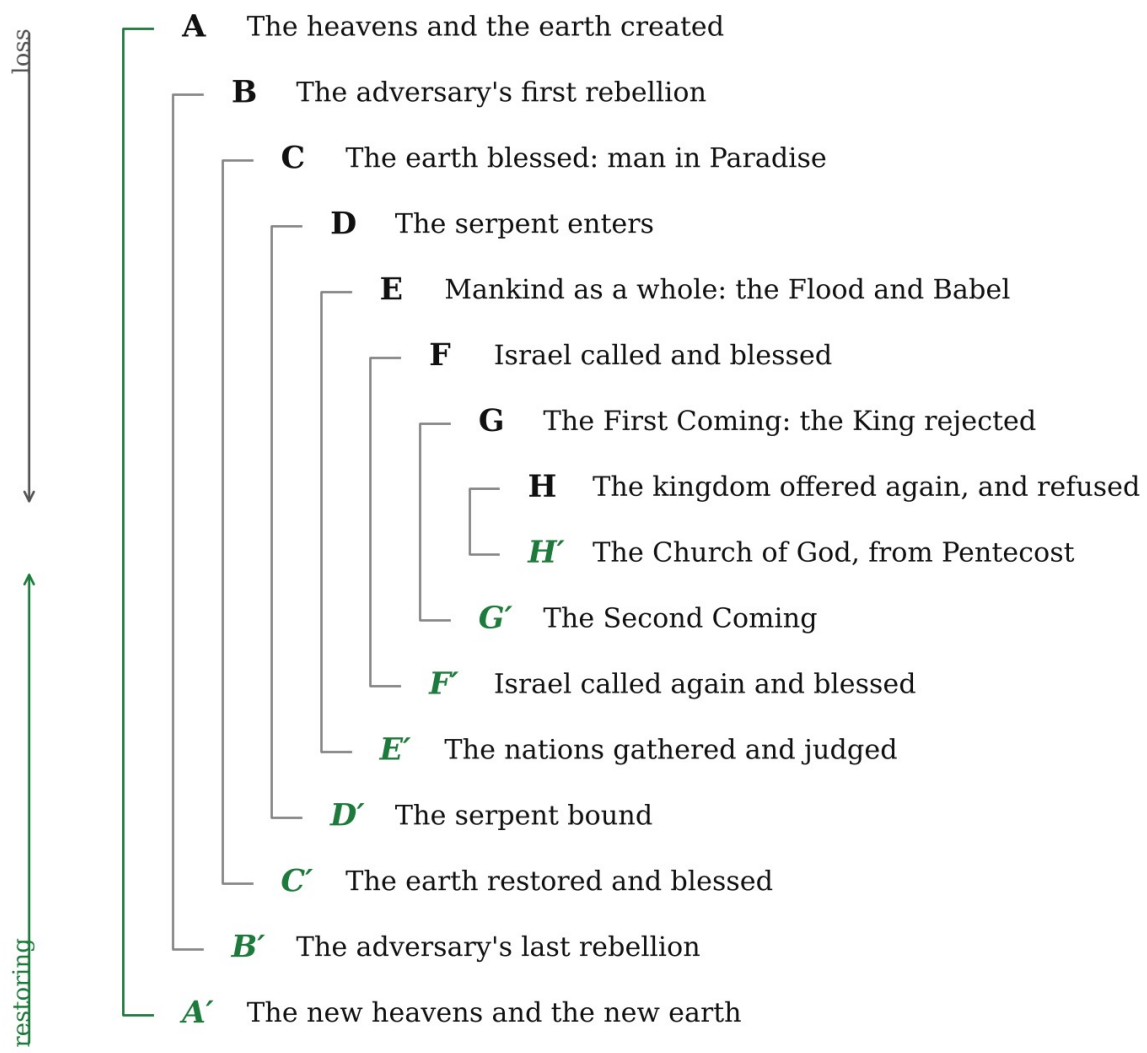

*Example: G and G´, the two comings of Christ, and where they sit in the whole plan.*

*In short: every pair chapter opens with a picture of its two members and a map showing where they sit in the plan.*

**Weighing it: Method, not argument.**

## B. The Sixteen Members

Here is the plan. Its first eight members run from the creation to the Church of God; its last eight run back, in reverse order, to the new creation. Each member on the way down is answered by its partner on the way back.




*God's plan of the ages, as an introversion: each member on the way down is answered by its partner on the way back.*

| Member | Where |
|---|---|
| **A** — The heavens and the earth created; all "very good" | Gen. 1:1–2:3 |
| **B** — Satan's first rebellion, through pride, after the creation and before the Fall | Ezek. 28:15-17; 1 Tim. 3:6 |
| **C** — The earth blessed: man in Paradise | Gen. 2 |
| **D** — Satan enters, and the consequence | Gen. 3 |
| **E** — Mankind dealt with as a whole: the world that perished in the Flood, and Babel | Gen. 4–11 |
| **F** — The chosen nation called, and blessed | Gen. 12 to Malachi |
| **G** — The First Coming: the King rejected and crucified | The Gospels |
| **H** — The kingdom offered again to Israel, and refused | Acts 3–28 |

| Member | Where |
|---|---|
| **H′** — The kingdom held back; the Church of God called out from Pentecost | Acts 2; Eph. 3 |
| **G′** — The Second Coming: the Day of the Lord | Revelation |
| **F′** — The chosen nation called again, and blessed | Rom. 11; Jer. 31 |
| **E′** — Mankind dealt with as a whole: the nations judged | Joel 3; Matt. 25 |
| **D′** — Satan bound, and the consequence | Rev. 20:1-3 |
| **C′** — The earth restored and blessed | Rev. 20:4-6; Isa. 35 |
| **B′** — Satan's final rebellion | Rev. 20:7-10 |
| **A′** — The new heavens and the new earth | Rev. 21–22 |

*In short: eight steps down from creation to the centre, eight steps back up to the new creation.*

**Weighing it: Narrative — sets out the outline; each pair is weighed in its own chapter.**

## C. A Walk Down and Back

Read down the first column and you have the history of loss. God made all things very good (A). The first of His creatures to fall was the adversary, lifted up with pride (B). God blessed the earth and set man in a garden (C); the adversary entered it, and man fell (D). Mankind as a whole went astray, until God destroyed the world by the Flood and scattered the nations at Babel (E). God then chose one man and his seed, and blessed that nation above all others (F), but Israel rejected its King when He came (G), and refused the kingdom again when it was offered a second time after His resurrection and Ascension (H).

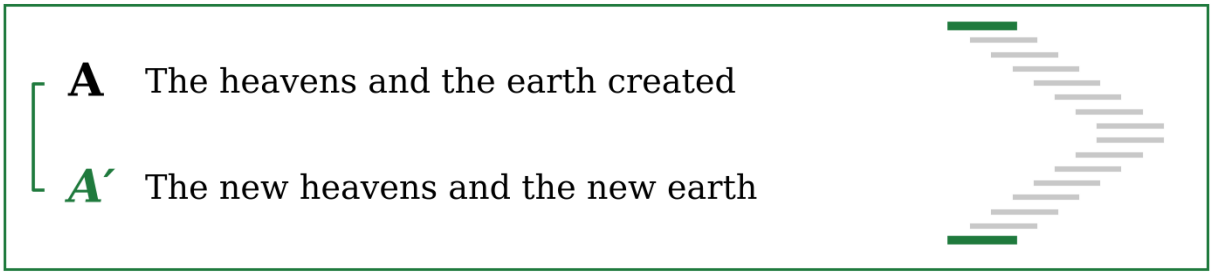
Read back up the second column and you have the history of restoring, in reverse order. In the middle God is calling out the Church of God (H′). Christ returns (G′). Israel is called again and blessed (F′). The nations are gathered and judged (E′). The adversary is bound (D′), and the earth is restored and blessed under Christ's reign (C′). The adversary is loosed for a season and makes his last rebellion (B′). Then come the new heavens and the new earth (A′), where all things are made new.

Each loss is answered in the order opposite to the order in which it came. The last thing lost is the first thing restored; the first thing lost, the very heavens and earth as God first made them, is the last thing made new.

*In short: the plan undoes the losses in reverse order, from the most recent back to the very first.*

**Weighing it: Reasonable inference — on the Shape claim; the reverse order is in the outline, and the chapters that follow test whether Scripture supports each pair.** The other side can fairly answer that the order of some later events, especially those in Revelation 20, is read differently by different schools. Where that matters, the chapter concerned says so.

# Chapter 3 — The Heavens and the Earth: Created and Made New




## A. Getting Our Bearings

Most readers know the first chapters of Genesis well: God creating the heavens and the earth in six days, the light, the seas, the plants, the sun and moon, the creatures, and at last man, made in God's image. Fewer have spent time in the last two chapters of Revelation. There John is shown, in vision, what God will do at the very end: a new heaven and a new earth, a holy city coming down from God, and God Himself living with His people.

These two passages are the bookends of the Bible. Everything between them, the whole story of sin and redemption, happens inside these two covers. This chapter sets them side by side and shows that the second answers the first, not in a general way, but point by point: the same heaven and earth, the same river, the same tree of life, the same God walking with man.

*In short: Genesis 1–2 and Revelation 21–22 are the two covers of the Bible, and the last answers the first.*

**Weighing it: Narrative.**

## B. The First Words and the Last

The Bible's first sentence is:

> **Genesis 1:1** *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*

Near its close, John sees:

> **Revelation 21:1** *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*

The words *heaven* and *earth* stand together in both. God had promised this through Isaiah, and Peter repeats the promise:

> **Isaiah 65:17** *For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.*
>
> **2 Peter 3:13** *Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

*In short: the Bible opens with God creating the heaven and the earth and closes with a new heaven and a new earth.*

**Weighing it: Direct statement — for the Pairs claim on A and A′; both ends use the same words, and Isaiah calls the second a new creating.** No reader disputes that Revelation 21 answers Genesis 1; what is disputed is only what "new" means, a renewal or a fresh creation. Either reading keeps the correspondence.

## C. Point by Point

The answer is not only in the opening words. Again and again, what was set in place in Genesis 1–2 is taken up in Revelation 21–22.

| Genesis | Revelation |
|---|---|
| God divides the light from the darkness, and there is evening and morning (Gen. 1:4-5) | "there shall be no night there" (Rev. 21:25) |
| God makes the sun and the moon to give light (Gen. 1:16) | "the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon" (Rev. 21:23) |
| God gathers the waters into seas (Gen. 1:10) | "there was no more sea" (Rev. 21:1) |
| A river goes out of Eden (Gen. 2:10) | "a pure river of water of life" (Rev. 22:1) |
| The tree of life in the midst of the garden (Gen. 2:9) | "the tree of life" on either side of the river (Rev. 22:2) |
| God walks in the garden with man (Gen. 3:8) | "the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them" (Rev. 21:3) |

The tree of life is the clearest of all. Man was shut out from it:

> **Genesis 3:22-24** *And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.*

At the end, the way is open again:

> **Revelation 22:2** *In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*
>
> **Revelation 22:14** *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*

*In short: night, sun, sea, river, tree and God's presence, each set in the first chapters, is taken up in the last.*

**Weighing it: Direct statement — for the Pairs claim on A and A′; the tree of life, the river and God's dwelling with men are named at both ends.** The other side can fairly answer that some items (the sea, the night) are answered by their removal rather than their return. That is so; correspondence includes contrast, and the contrast here points the same way: what belonged to the old order is taken away, and what was lost is restored.

### D. What A Does Not Include

Bullinger's original outline put a ruin of the earth between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, the teaching called the Gap Theory. This study does not, and the reason is in the text itself. Genesis 1:2 describes the earth as God first made it, unformed and unfilled, before He formed it and filled it in the six days that follow. Every day ends in "good," and the whole ends:

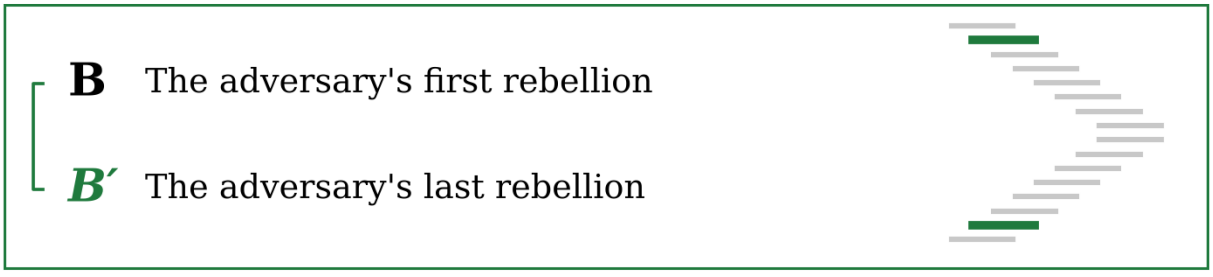
> **Genesis 1:31** *And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.*

Member A therefore holds the whole account of creation, Genesis 1:1–2:3, as one "very good" work. This library's study *Genesis 1:2 and the Gap Theory Revealed* sets out the case in full.

*In short: the first member is God's finished, very good creation, with no ruin inside it.*

**Weighing it: Strong inference — for the Pairs claim on A; the account calls the finished work "very good" and signals no ruin between its first two verses.** The other side can fairly answer that "without form, and void" (Gen. 1:2) is used elsewhere of desolation (Jer. 4:23). The same words also describe a state not yet formed, and the six days that follow are the forming of it; the study cited gives the full answer.

## Chapter 4 — The Adversary: His First Rebellion and His Last




### A. Who Is the Adversary?

The Bible gives this enemy many names, and Revelation gathers several of them into one verse:

> **Revelation 12:9** *And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

*Satan* is a Hebrew word meaning *adversary*, one who stands against. *Devil* is from a Greek word meaning *slanderer*, one who accuses falsely. He is not a figure of speech or a name for the evil in men's hearts: Scripture presents him as a real created being who opposes God and deceives men. Jesus called him **"the prince of this world" (John 12:31)**, and Paul calls him **"the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4)**, who blinds the minds of unbelievers.

This chapter looks at two moments in his history: how his rebellion began, and how it ends. The beginning is the harder of the two to see, because Scripture does not narrate it directly; we gather it from a few passages. The end is plainly told in Revelation 20. So this pair is weighed a little more cautiously than the others.

*In short: the adversary is Satan, the devil, "that old serpent"; this chapter traces his first rebellion and his last.*

**Weighing it: Direct statement — for who the adversary is; Revelation 12:9 gives the names together.**

## B. Lifted Up with Pride

Before the Fall of man there was the fall of another. Paul warns that an elder must not be a new convert:

> **1 Timothy 3:6** *Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.*

The "condemnation of the devil" is the judgment that came upon him for pride. Ezekiel, addressing the king of Tyre in words that rise far above any earthly king, describes a being created perfect, set as **"the anointed cherub that covereth" (Ezekiel 28:14)**:

> **Ezekiel 28:15** *Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.*
>
> **Ezekiel 28:17** *Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.*

*In short: the adversary was created perfect and fell through pride.*

**Weighing it: Reasonable inference — for the Pairs claim on B; that Ezekiel 28 reaches behind the king of Tyre to the adversary is the more natural reading, and 1 Timothy 3:6 ties the devil's condemnation to pride.** The other side can fairly answer that Ezekiel 28 is addressed to a man, the king of Tyre, and that the passage can be read as poetry about him alone. The words "created" (Ezek. 28:15) and "anointed cherub" (28:14) are hard to fit to any man.

## C. When Did He Fall?

The outline places this member after the creation and before the Fall of man. Two verses mark the limits. At the creation, all the angels rejoiced together:

> **Job 38:7** *When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*

And when Genesis 3 opens, the serpent is already the enemy of God's word (Gen. 3:1). So the adversary's rebellion falls after God laid the foundations of the earth, when **"all the sons of God shouted for joy"**, and before the temptation in the garden. Scripture does not give a closer date, and this study does not invent one.

*In short: the first rebellion came after creation and before the Fall; Scripture says no more about its date.*

**Weighing it: Reasonable inference — for the Pairs claim on B; Job 38:7 and Genesis 3:1 bound the date, and nothing places it before Genesis 1:2.** The other side can fairly answer that Job 38:7 is poetry, and "all" may be general. It may; but it is the only verse that speaks of the angels at the creation, and it speaks of them as one joyful company.

## D. His Last Rebellion

The adversary's first rebellion is answered by his last. After the thousand years:

> **Revelation 20:7-8** *And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.*
>
> **Revelation 20:10** *And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

The pattern is the same at both ends. He was perfect, and fell by pride; he will be loosed, and will rebel again. The difference is the outcome: the first time he went on to deceive mankind; the last time he is cast down for ever, and deceives no more.

*In short: the adversary's first rebellion opens the history of loss, and his last closes it for good.*

**Weighing it: Strong inference — for the Pairs claim on B and B´; Revelation 20:7-10 records a final rebellion of the adversary and its end, matching the first.** The other side can fairly answer that the first rebellion is drawn from Ezekiel and Timothy, not narrated in Genesis, so the match is between a narrated end and an inferred beginning. That is true, and it is why member B is weighed lower than B´.

# Chapter 5 — The Earth Blessed, and the Earth Restored

**C** The earth blessed: man in Paradise

***C′*** The earth restored and blessed



## A. Getting Our Bearings

*Paradise* is an old word for a garden or park. The English Bible does not use it in Genesis, but the Greek translation of the Old Testament uses it for the garden of Eden, where God placed the first man **"to dress it and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15)**. The New Testament uses it three times (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:4; Revelation 2:7), each time looking forward to the place of God's presence, where the tree of life is restored. In the beginning the whole earth was under man's care, as David sang: **"Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet" (Psalms 8:6)**.

The partner of this member is a time many Christians have never been taught about. After Christ returns, Scripture says, He will reign on this earth, and those who belong to Him will reign with Him. Revelation 20 speaks of this reign six times as lasting **"a thousand years"**, and it is often called *the Millennium*, from the Latin for a thousand years. The prophets, centuries earlier, described what the earth will be like in that day: the desert blooming, the wolf lying down with the lamb, and the knowledge of the Lord filling the earth. That is the earth restored, and it is the partner of the earth as God first blessed it.

*In short: Paradise was the earth as God first blessed it under man's care; the restored earth is that blessing returning when Christ reigns.*

**Weighing it: Narrative — introduces the terms "Paradise" and "the thousand years," which are weighed in the sections below.**

## B. Man in Paradise

God planted a garden and set man in it, with dominion over the earth and everything that lived on it:

> **Genesis 1:28** *And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*

> **Genesis 2:8-9** *And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.*

The ground gave its fruit freely; no thorn is mentioned until the curse (Gen. 3:17-18). The creatures were given green herbs for food (Gen. 1:30). The man named the animals, and there was no fear between them.

*In short: in the first Paradise man ruled a blessed earth with God's blessing on it.*

**Weighing it: Direct statement — for the Pairs claim on C; the blessing and the dominion are stated in Genesis 1–2.**

## C. The Earth Restored

The partner of C is the earth restored under the reign of Christ. Revelation 20 records the reign:

> **Revelation 20:4** *And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*
>
> **Revelation 20:6** *Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*

The prophets describe the earth in that day. The curse on the ground is lifted:

> **Isaiah 35:1** *The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.*
>
> **Isaiah 55:13** *Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.*

And peace returns among the creatures, as it was in the beginning:

> **Isaiah 11:6** *The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.*
>
> **Isaiah 11:9** *They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*

What was given to Adam, dominion over the earth, is exercised again, now by Christ and those who reign with Him.

*In short: the blessing of the first Paradise returns to the earth when Christ reigns.*

**Weighing it: Reasonable inference — for the Pairs claim on C´; the reign is stated in Revelation 20, and the restored earth is stated by the prophets, but that both describe the same period is this study's**

**step.** The other side can fairly answer that Revelation 20 says nothing of thorns, deserts or animals, and that the prophets' pictures could belong to the new earth of Revelation 21 instead. Isaiah 65:20, which places death and old age within the restored age, shows that at least some of these prophecies describe an earth that is blessed but not yet made new, which fits member C′ and not A′.

### D. A Question This Study Leaves Open

The thousand years of Revelation 20 are stated six times in that chapter, and this study takes them as stated. How literal each detail of the prophets' pictures is meant to be is a separate question, and this study does not settle it. The correspondence does not depend on it: whatever the detail, the earth that was blessed in Genesis 2 is blessed again under Christ's rule.

*In short: the reign is stated; the details of the prophets' pictures are held loosely.*

**Weighing it: Concession — the correspondence stands without settling how literally every prophetic picture is meant.**

## Chapter 6 — The Serpent Enters, and the Serpent Bound




### A. Getting Our Bearings

Genesis 3 tells how sin came into the world. The serpent questioned what God had said, the woman was deceived, and the man disobeyed. The consequences were immediate: shame, fear, the curse on the ground, and death. Many readers take the serpent to be only an animal. Scripture tells us more. Revelation 12:9, quoted in the last chapter, calls the devil **"that old serpent"**: the one who spoke in the garden was the adversary himself.

This chapter sets the serpent's entrance beside his binding. What he began by deceiving the first woman, he will be stopped from doing when he is bound **"that he should deceive the nations no more" (Revelation 20:3)**.

*In short: the serpent of Genesis 3 is the adversary, and this chapter sets his entrance beside his binding.*

**Weighing it: Narrative.**

## B. The Serpent in the Garden

Genesis 3 opens with the adversary already at work:

> **Genesis 3:1** *Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*

The consequence followed at once: sin, shame, the curse on the ground, and death **(Romans 5:12)**. God also spoke the first promise of the One who would undo it:

> **Genesis 3:15** *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

*In short: the serpent entered, deceived, and brought death; and God promised his defeat.*

**Weighing it: Direct statement — for the Pairs claim on D.**

## C. The Serpent Bound

Revelation names the same enemy by the same name, and binds him:

> **Revelation 20:2-3** *And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.*

The words "that old serpent" reach back to Genesis 3. The one who entered the garden to deceive is now shut up "that he should deceive the nations no more." The consequence of his entering was deception; the consequence of his binding is that deception ceases.

*In short: Revelation itself calls him "that old serpent," and binds the deceiver so that he deceives no more.*

**Weighing it: Direct statement — for the Pairs claim on D and D′; Revelation 20:2 names the serpent of Genesis, and 20:3 reverses his work of deceiving.** The other side can fairly answer only on timing, whether the binding is future or a picture of Christ's work now. On either reading the correspondence with Genesis 3 is Scripture's own; this study, following the order of Revelation 19–20, takes the binding as following Christ's return.

# Chapter 7 — The Nations: Scattered and Gathered

**E** Mankind as a whole: the Flood and Babel

***E′*** The nations gathered and judged



## A. Getting Our Bearings

From the Fall of man to the call of Abraham, Genesis 4–11 covers roughly two thousand years, and in all that time God had no chosen nation. He dealt with mankind as a whole. This is the age of Cain and Abel, of Enoch, of Noah and the Flood, and of the tower of Babel, after which God divided mankind into separate nations with separate languages.

Scripture often calls these peoples *the nations*, or *the Gentiles*, meaning every people other than Israel. When Israel was later chosen, the nations did not drop out of God's plan. The promise to Abraham was that **"in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22:18)**. At the end, when Christ returns, the nations are gathered before Him again, and He deals once more with mankind as a whole. That gathering is the partner of this member.

*In short: before Israel was chosen, God dealt with all mankind together; when Christ returns, He will deal with all the nations together again.*

**Weighing it: Narrative.**

## B. The World That Then Was

After the Fall, God dealt with mankind as a whole. There was as yet no chosen nation. Cain's line and Seth's line grew together; the godly line, whose men **"then began men to call upon the name of the LORD" (Genesis 4:26)**, mingled with the rest until the earth was filled with violence (Gen. 6:11-13). God brought the Flood:

> **2 Peter 3:6** *Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:*

After the Flood, mankind again acted as one, and built a tower against God:

> **Genesis 11:8-9** *So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.*

*In short: twice mankind as a whole went astray, and twice God judged the whole: by the Flood, and by the scattering at Babel.*

**Weighing it: Direct statement — for the Pairs claim on E; the Flood and the scattering of the nations are narrated.** This study takes "the world that then was" of 2 Peter 3:6 as the world before the Flood, as the verse itself says it was "overflowed with water," and not as a world before Genesis 1:2.

### C. The Nations Gathered

The partner of E is the day when God again deals with mankind as a whole, gathering the nations He once scattered:

> **Joel 3:2** *I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.*
>
> **Matthew 25:31-32** *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:*

And the confusion of Babel is undone:

> **Zephaniah 3:9** *For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.*

At Babel the people were of one speech and joined to rebel; God confounded their language and scattered them. In that day God gives them a pure language, and gathers them, that they may "call upon the name of the LORD."

*In short: the nations scattered at Babel are gathered again, and the curse of confused speech is reversed.*

**Weighing it: Strong inference — for the Pairs claim on E and E′; the gathering and the pure language answer the scattering and the confusion point by point.** The other side can fairly answer that Zephaniah's "pure language" may mean pure speech (lips purified from idolatry) rather than one tongue. Even so, the contrast with Babel's rebellious unity stands: the nations once gathered against God are gathered to serve Him "with one consent."

## Chapter 8 — Israel: Called and Called Again

**F** Israel called and blessed

***F′*** Israel called again and blessed



## A. Who Is Israel?

Israel is the nation that came from Abraham, through his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob, whom God renamed Israel. Jacob's twelve sons became the twelve tribes. God made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants that He called everlasting:

> **Genesis 17:7** *And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.*

To Israel God gave more than to any other people. Paul lists it:

> **Romans 9:4-5** *Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.*

Israel was not chosen to keep the blessing to itself. God told Abraham that through his seed all nations would be blessed, and Paul says that this was the gospel preached beforehand: **"In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Galatians 3:8)**. That seed is Christ, who came "of the fathers" as concerning the flesh.

Many Christians have been taught that God is finished with Israel, and that the Church has simply taken its place. This chapter shows why Paul did not think so.

*In short: Israel is Abraham's seed, chosen to receive God's covenants and, through Christ, to bring blessing to every nation.*

**Weighing it: Direct statement — on who Israel is and what was given to it; Genesis 17:7 and Romans 9:4-5 say so.**

## B. The Chosen Nation Called

When all the nations had gone astray, God chose one man, and from him one nation, to carry His promise:

> **Genesis 12:1-3** *Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*

Israel received the covenants, the Law, the temple and the prophets (Rom. 9:4-5). Yet the nation failed again and again, and Malachi closes the Old Testament with a warning and a promise.

*In short: God called Abraham's seed and blessed them above all nations, and they failed.*

**Weighing it: Direct statement — for the Pairs claim on F.**

### C. The Chosen Nation Called Again

Paul says plainly that Israel's fall is not final:

> **Romans 11:25-26** *For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:*

The prophets describe the same calling again: the nation gathered to its land, given a new heart, and brought under a new covenant:

> **Jeremiah 31:31** *Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:*
>
> **Ezekiel 36:24** *For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.*
>
> **Ezekiel 36:26** *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.*

The God who called Abraham out of the nations calls his seed again; the nation that failed under the Old Covenant is blessed under the New.

*In short: the nation that was called and fell is called again and blessed.*

**Weighing it: Strong inference — for the Pairs claim on F and F′; Romans 11 states that Israel will be saved, and the prophets describe its regathering and new heart.** The other side can fairly answer that some read "all Israel" in Romans 11:26 as the whole people of God, Jew and Gentile together. Paul's own contrast in the same verses, "blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in," keeps Israel and the Gentiles distinct.

## Chapter 9 — The Two Comings of Christ

**G** The First Coming: the King rejected

***G′*** The Second Coming: the King returns



### A. Why Two Comings?

Many Christians think of Christ's coming as one event, and some have never been taught that Scripture speaks of two. Yet the prophets of the Old Testament spoke of the Messiah in two quite different ways. Some passages describe Him suffering, rejected, and put to death; others describe Him reigning in

power over the whole earth. Peter says the prophets themselves searched to understand how both could be true:

> **1 Peter 1:10-11** *Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.*

*The sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow*: two things, in that order. The prophets saw both, but not the time between them. Jesus Himself showed where the line falls. In the synagogue at Nazareth He read from Isaiah 61:

> **Luke 4:18-21** *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*

He stopped in the middle of a sentence. Isaiah's verse goes on:

> **Isaiah 61:2** *To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;*

Jesus closed the book after "the acceptable year of the Lord," and said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled." The rest of the sentence, "the day of vengeance of our God," was not fulfilled that day; it waits for His second coming.

Zechariah gives a second example. He foretold the King coming **"lowly, and riding upon an ass" (Zechariah 9:9)**, which Jesus fulfilled when He rode into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:5). The same prophet foretold that **"his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives" (Zechariah 14:4)**, in a day of battle and deliverance for Jerusalem. That has not yet happened; and it was from the mount of Olives that Jesus ascended, with the promise that He would come again in like manner (Acts 1:11-12).

So the Bible speaks of two comings. In the first, He came to suffer: He died for our sins, was buried, rose again the third day (1 Cor. 15:3-4), and ascended to sit at the right hand of God (Hebrews 1:3). In the second, He comes in power and glory to judge and to reign:

> **Revelation 19:11** *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.*
>
> **Revelation 19:16** *And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

One more distinction will help. Before Christ comes to the earth to reign, Paul says, the members of the Church of God, living and dead, will be gathered to meet Him in the air:

> **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

This gathering is the hope of the Church (Titus 2:13), and it belongs with the Church's own member of the plan (Chapter 10). Member G′ is His coming *to the earth*, the Day of the Lord, which the book of Revelation describes.

*In short: the prophets foretold Christ's sufferings and His glory; His first coming fulfilled the one, and His second will fulfil the other.*

**Weighing it: Direct statement — on there being two comings; 1 Peter 1:11 sets the sufferings and the glory in order, and Luke 4 shows Jesus fulfilling only the first half of Isaiah 61:2.** The other side can fairly answer only on how the events around the second coming are ordered; that there are two comings, no reader of Scripture disputes.

## B. The King Rejected

God sent His Son to Israel, the King to His own people:

> **John 1:11** *He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*

He was rejected and crucified. God raised Him from the dead, and He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9). Paul sums up His first coming as a ministry to Israel:

> **Romans 15:8** *Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:*

*In short: the King came to His own; they rejected Him; God raised Him and took Him up.*

**Weighing it: Direct statement — for the Pairs claim on G.**

## C. The King Returning

At the Ascension the promise of His return was given at once:

> **Acts 1:11** *Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*
>
> **Hebrews 9:28** *So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

The first coming was in humility, to be rejected; the second is in glory, to reign. The book of Revelation is the record of that coming, the Day of the Lord, when **"the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Revelation 11:15)**.

*In short: the One who came and was rejected will come again, "the second time," and reign.*

**Weighing it: Direct statement — for the Pairs claim on G and G′; Hebrews 9:28 itself counts the two comings.** No reader of Scripture disputes the pair; only the timing and order of the events around the second coming are read differently.

# Chapter 10 — The Centre: The Church of God

**H** The kingdom offered again, and refused

***H′*** The Church of God, from Pentecost



## A. Getting Our Bearings

This is the centre of the whole plan, and it needs the most explanation. Two things were happening at the same time in the book of Acts. God was offering the kingdom to Israel once more, and God was calling out a new body of people, the Church of God. To follow this chapter, we need to know what each of these is.

*In short: this chapter explains the kingdom offered to Israel, and the Church of God called out from Pentecost.*

**Weighing it: Narrative.**

## B. What Is the Kingdom?

When the Bible speaks of the kingdom promised to Israel, it means something definite: the rule of God's chosen King, a son of David, on the earth, over a restored Israel and the nations. God promised David:

> **2 Samuel 7:16** *And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.*

The angel told Mary that her son would receive that very throne:

> **Luke 1:32-33** *He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*

Jesus began His ministry preaching **"Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17)**: the promised kingdom was near, because the King was present. After His resurrection, His disciples still expected it:

> **Acts 1:6** *When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*

Jesus did not tell them they were wrong to expect it; He told them it was not for them to know the times (Acts 1:7). The kingdom is still promised. It waits for the King's return.

*In short: the kingdom is the reign of David's Son on the earth, promised to Israel, offered when He came, and still to come.*

**Weighing it: Direct statement — that the kingdom was promised to David's Son and expected by the disciples; 2 Samuel 7:16, Luke 1:32-33 and Acts 1:6 say so.**

## C. What Is the Church of God?

The word *church* in our English Bibles translates the Greek *ekklēsia*, which means *a called-out company*, an assembly of people called out for a purpose. In the New Testament the Church of God is not a building, and it is not a denomination. It is the whole company of those whom God has called out to belong to Christ, from the day of Pentecost onward.

Paul names it as one of three groups of people in the world:

> **1 Corinthians 10:32** *Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:*

The Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God: the Church is neither of the first two; it is a third company, made up of believers drawn out of both. Paul describes it as a body, with Christ as its head:

> **Ephesians 1:22-23** *And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*

A person becomes a member of that body by believing, as Paul says:

> **Romans 10:9** *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

and is sealed as God's own with the gift of holy spirit:

> **Ephesians 1:13** *In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,*

Jesus had spoken of it as still future: **"upon this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18)**. It began on the day of Pentecost, when the gift of holy spirit was first poured out, and about three thousand believed and were added (Acts 2:41).

*In short: the Church of God is the called-out company of all who believe, Jew and Gentile, joined to Christ as one body, from Pentecost onward.*

**Weighing it: Direct statement — on what the Church of God is; 1 Corinthians 10:32, Ephesians 1:22-23 and Romans 10:9 say so.**

## D. What Is the Mystery?

In the Bible a *mystery* is not a puzzle. It is a sacred secret: something God kept hidden and then made known. Paul speaks of **"the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)**. What was the secret? That in this body, Jew and Gentile would be joined on equal terms, **"fellowheirs, and of the same body" (Ephesians 3:6)**. The prophets had foretold blessing for the Gentiles through Israel; they had never foretold a body in which Gentiles and Jews stand as equals, with no difference between them.

This explains why the prophets saw the sufferings of Christ and the glory to follow, but not the long time between them (Chapter 9). The Church of God fills that time, and it was a secret until God revealed it through Paul. That is why it stands at the centre of the plan, between the two comings, and why the prophets never spoke of it.

*In short: the Mystery is the once-secret truth that Jew and Gentile are one body in Christ; it fills the time between the two comings that the prophets did not see.*

**Weighing it: Strong inference — that the Mystery explains the time the prophets did not see; Romans 16:25 calls it "kept secret since the world began," and Ephesians 3:5 says it was not made known in other ages.** The other side can fairly answer that the prophets did foretell blessing for the Gentiles. They did; what they did not foretell was one body on equal terms, which is what Paul calls the Mystery.

## E. The Kingdom Offered Again (H)

After the resurrection and Ascension, the kingdom was offered to Israel a second time. Peter, in the temple, called the nation to repent so that God would send Christ back to them:

> **Acts 3:19-20** *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:*

The offer was refused, first in Jerusalem (Acts 7:51), then in the synagogues of the dispersion (Acts 13:46), and finally by the leaders of the Jews at Rome, where Paul quoted Isaiah over them:

> **Acts 28:25-26** *And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:*

*In short: through the Acts the kingdom was offered to Israel again, and at Rome the refusal was final.*

**Weighing it: Strong inference — for the Centre claim; Acts 3:19-20 makes Christ's return conditional on the nation's repentance, and Acts 28 records the last refusal.** The other side can fairly answer that Peter's offer may be a general call to repent rather than a renewed offer of the kingdom. The words "he shall send Jesus Christ" tie the repentance to His return.

## F. The Church of God Called Out (H′)

Meanwhile, from the day of Pentecost, God was calling out a new body. The gift of holy spirit was poured out (Acts 2:4, 33), and Peter told the crowd:

> **Acts 2:38** *Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

Paul calls this body "the church of God" (1 Cor. 10:32), distinct from Jew and Gentile, and into it all are baptized by one spirit:

> **1 Corinthians 12:13** *For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

The full truth of this body, that Jew and Gentile are fellow-heirs in one body, had been kept secret from the ages and was revealed to Paul:

> **Ephesians 3:5-6** *Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:*
>
> **Colossians 1:26** *Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:*

*In short: from Pentecost God has been calling out the Church of God, whose full truth, the Mystery, was made known through Paul.*

**Weighing it: Strong inference — for the Centre claim; the Church of God begins with the outpouring at Pentecost, and the Mystery is the fuller revelation of it, not a second church begun later.** The other side can fairly answer, with Bullinger's own original outline, that the Mystery body began only after Acts 28. But 1 Corinthians 12:13, written during the Acts, already speaks of "one body" into which Jew and Gentile are baptized; this library's Seven Administrations study gives the full case.

## G. Why the Centre Overlaps

Here is the objection from the Introduction (§D, fourth point): H and H′ do not follow one another; they run side by side through the Acts. That is true, and it is how this centre should be read. In an introversion the two central members are the turning point, and here the turning is not a moment but a stretch of time. Through the Acts the kingdom was offered to Israel (H) while the Church of God was being called out (H′). When the offer was finally refused at Acts 28, what remained was the Church of God alone; and Scripture describes the present time in those terms:

> **Hebrews 2:8** *Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.*

"Not yet": the kingdom is held back. Christ is at God's right hand, and all things are not yet put under Him. In the meantime God has made known through the Church of God **"the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10)**.

*In short: the two central members overlap because the turning point of the whole plan is not a single day but the time of the Acts.*

**Weighing it: Reasonable inference — for the Centre claim; the overlap is real, and the centre is read as a turning stretch rather than a single point.** The other side can fairly answer that this weakens the neatness of the mirror at its most important point. It does; and this study states it rather than hiding it. What remains strong is that the Church of God stands between the two comings, which no reading of Scripture disputes.

### H. Why the Church Stands at the Centre

The centre of an introversion is its emphasis. The Church of God is placed there not because it is the last thing in history, but because the whole plan turns on it. Before it, the history is of loss; after it, of restoring. It is the one company in the plan that does not fail, because it does not stand by its own strength:

> **Romans 5:2** *By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

*In short: the Church of God stands at the turning point of the plan, and it stands by grace.*

**Weighing it: Reasonable inference — for the Centre claim; that the centre of a structure carries its emphasis is a rule of structures, and the Church of God is placed there.**

## Chapter 11 — The Lesson of the Structure

### A. Every Created Order Failed

Bullinger drew one lesson from the plan, and it is the heart of this study. Read down the first column again, and every created order that God set up failed when it stood on its own.

- **The angels.** The adversary fell through pride; and **"the angels which kept not their first estate" (Jude 6)** are reserved for judgment.
- **Man.** Adam, in the most favourable place ever given to man, fell: **"by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin" (Romans 5:12)**.
- **The nations.** Mankind as a whole, **"when they knew God, they glorified him not as God" (Romans 1:21)**, and went their own way until the Flood and Babel.
- **Israel.** The chosen nation, given the covenants and the Law, fell through unbelief:

> **Romans 11:20** *Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:*

*In short: angels, Adam, the nations and Israel each failed when they stood on their own.*

**Weighing it: Direct statement — for the Lesson claim; Scripture records each failure in so many words.**

## B. Whatever Stands, Stands by Grace

The answer to every failure is the same. Israel was broken off through unbelief, and the Gentile "standest by faith." The Church of God has access by Christ **"into this grace wherein we stand" (Romans 5:2)**. Paul writes that God is using the Church to teach this lesson to the heavenly powers themselves:

> **Ephesians 3:10** *To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,*

The plan, read as a whole, shows that no created being, angel or man, nation or chosen nation, can stand except by the grace of God in Christ. All things were created **"for him" (Colossians 1:16)**, and God will **"gather together in one all things in Christ" (Ephesians 1:10)**. That is why the second half of the plan, the restoring, is entirely God's work, and why each step of it centres on Christ: His return, His reign, His binding of the adversary, His making all things new.

*In short: the lesson of the plan is that God's grace in Christ restores what every created order lost.*

**Weighing it: Strong inference — for the Lesson claim; Ephesians 3:10 states that God is teaching His wisdom to the heavenly powers through the Church, and Romans 5:2 and 11:20 give standing by grace and faith as the contrast to each failure.** The other side can fairly answer that Ephesians 3:10 does not say what lesson is being taught. That is so; this study's reading is drawn from the plan as a whole, and is weighed accordingly.

# Chapter 12 — The Plan and the Seven Administrations

## A. Getting Our Bearings

The word *administration* translates the Greek *oikonomia*, the management of a household: God's way of ordering His dealings with mankind in a particular stretch of time. This library's study *The Seven Administrations of Scripture* counts seven such stretches, from Eden to the Day of Judgment, each opened when God makes Himself heard and sets new terms. This chapter shows how those seven fit the plan studied here.

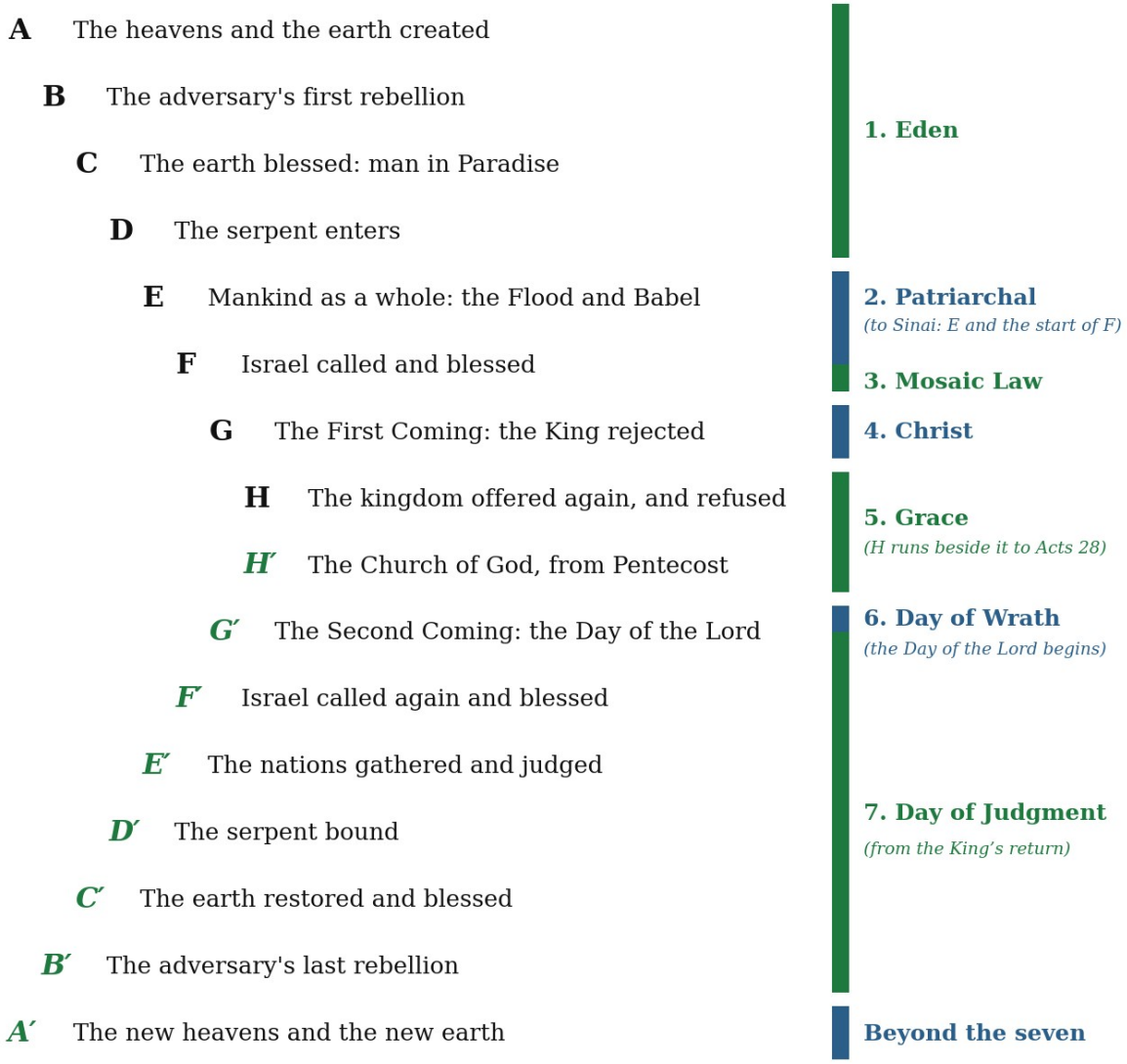
*In short: an administration is a stretch of time in which God deals with mankind on stated terms; this chapter lays the seven beside the plan.*

**Weighing it: Narrative.**

## B. Two Ways of Reading the Same History

This library already has a study of *The Seven Administrations of Scripture*. It reads the same history in a straight line: seven stretches of time, each opened by God and each with its own governing terms. The plan in this study reads the same history as a mirror: each loss on the way down answered by a restoring on the way back.

The two do not compete. One counts the ages; the other shows how the ages answer one another. Laid side by side, they fit:




*The Plan of the Ages, with the seven administrations laid over it.*

| Administration | Members of the Plan |
|---|---|
| 1. Eden: the Garden | A, B, C and D (creation, the adversary's fall, Paradise, the Fall of man) |
| 2. Patriarchal | E (the world before the Flood and Babel), and the start of F (Abraham) |
| 3. Mosaic Law | F (Israel, from Sinai to Malachi) |
| 4. Christ: the Kingdom at Hand | G (the First Coming) |
| 5. Grace: the Administration of the Mystery | H′ (the Church of God from Pentecost), with H (the kingdom re-offered) running beside it through the Acts |

| Administration | Members of the Plan |
|---|---|
| 6. The Day of Wrath | The opening of G′: the Day of the Lord on the earth |
| 7. The Day of Judgment | G′ completed at the King's return, with F′ and E′; then D′, C′ and B′ (the adversary bound, the earth restored, the last rebellion) |
| Beyond the seven | A′ (the new heavens and the new earth) |

*In short: the seven administrations fit inside the Plan's eight pairs, and the "Beyond the Seven" of that study is member A′ here.*

**Weighing it: Reasonable inference — for the Shape claim; the two outlines agree in order throughout, and at every boundary except three, noted below.**

## C. Three Points to Reconcile

Three points do not line up neatly, and they are stated rather than smoothed over.

- **The Patriarchal administration covers two members.** It runs from the expulsion from Eden to Sinai, so it spans member E (mankind as a whole) and the opening of F (the call of Abraham). The Plan divides at the call of Abraham, because that is where God begins to deal with one nation; the administrations divide at Sinai, because that is where the governing terms change. Both divisions are true to Scripture; they measure different things.
- **Where the kingdom offer belongs.** In the Seven Administrations, the administration of Christ closes at Pentecost, and the kingdom offer in the Acts falls inside the Grace administration. In the Plan, the kingdom offer is its own member, H, beside the Church of God. Again both are true: the governing terms changed at Pentecost, but the offer to Israel did not end until Acts 28. The Seven Administrations study (Chapter 5 §F) shows that the close of the offer changed no one's terms of salvation and was marked by no voice from heaven.
- **Where the Second Coming falls.** The previous edition of this study placed G′, F′ and E′ together under the Day of Wrath. That is true of the Day of the Lord taken as a whole, but it does not match the Seven Administrations' own boundary. There, the Day of Judgment opens when heaven is opened and Christ returns (Revelation 19:11). So the Day of the Lord begins in the Day of Wrath, but the King's return itself, Israel's deliverance when **"there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer" (Romans 11:26)**, and the gathering of the nations before His throne (Matthew 25:31-32) open the Day of Judgment. The table in §B now follows that boundary.

The Seven Administrations study now carries this table, these three points and a summary of this whole study as its own Chapter 8, "The Seven Seen as a Mirror" (pod-V7).

*In short: three boundaries differ because the two outlines measure different things; neither contradicts the other.*

**Weighing it: Concession — the two outlines differ at three boundaries, and each difference is explained by what each outline measures.** The other side can fairly answer that a fit needing three explanations is a loose fit. That is fair; what the fit rests on is the agreement in order throughout, and at every other boundary.

# Closing — What Would Change This Study's Mind

## A. Three Findings That Would Overturn the Plan

A plan like this is only as strong as its pairs. Three findings would overturn it:

- **A pair with no link in Scripture.** If any of the eight pairs could be matched only by the reader's choice, with no word, name or image carried from one end to the other, the Pairs claim would fail at that point. Each chapter above has given the link: "heaven and earth," "that old serpent," "the tree of life," "the second time," the scattered and gathered nations.
- **A loss with no restoring.** If Scripture recorded a loss in Genesis that is nowhere answered at the end, the Shape claim would be incomplete. None has been found: even the curse is answered, **"there shall be no more curse" (Revelation 22:3)**.
- **A restoring before its loss is answered in order.** If the order of the restoring did not run back in reverse, the plan would be a list, not an introversion. The order of Revelation 19–22 follows the plan: the King's return (G′), the adversary bound (D′), the reign (C′), the last rebellion (B′), the new heaven and earth (A′).

None of these is found in the text. The places where the plan is weakest, the date of the adversary's first fall and the overlap at the centre, are stated in the chapters where they arise.

*In short: the plan would fail if a pair had no Scriptural link, a loss had no answer, or the order did not run back; none of these is found.*

**Weighing it: Method, not argument — names what would count against the study, so that a reader can go looking.**

## B. The End from the Beginning

The Bible is not a collection of separate stories. It is one account of one purpose, declared at the beginning and fulfilled at the end. What was lost in Genesis is restored in Revelation, step by step and in order, and at the turning point of the whole stands the Church of God, which stands by grace. **"Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5)**.

*In short: the structure of Scripture shows a God who planned the end from the beginning, and will finish what He began.*

**Weighing it: Narrative.**

# Appendix A — Bullinger's Plan and the Corrected Plan

Bullinger published his "Plan of the Ages" in *The Apocalypse* (1902; 2nd ed. 1909). This library's revised edition of that book corrected it at three points, and this study uses the corrected Plan.

| Member | Bullinger's original | As used here | Reason |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | The heavens and earth created (Gen. 1:1), with a ruin following in 1:2 | The whole creation, Gen. 1:1–2:3, all "very good" | No Gap Theory: Gen. 1:2 is the earth as first made, before it was formed and filled (Gen. 1:31) |
| B | Satan's first rebellion, placed between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2 | Satan's first rebellion, after the creation and before Gen. 3 | Job 38:7 has all the angels rejoicing at the creation; nothing places the fall before Gen. 1:2 |
| E | "The world that then was" read as the world before Gen. 1:2 | Gen. 4–11: the world that perished in the Flood, and Babel | 2 Pet. 3:6 says that world "being overflowed with water, perished" |
| H and H′ | The kingdom offered and refused through Acts; the Church (the Mystery) begun after Acts 28 | The kingdom offered and refused through Acts; the Church of God called out from Pentecost, the Mystery revealed through Paul | 1 Cor. 12:13 and Acts 2 place the one body from Pentecost |

**Weighing it: Concession — the original Plan needed correcting at these points; the correspondences themselves, which are the substance of the Plan, all stand.**

# Appendix B — Weight of Each Argument

| # | Argument | Where | Weight | What the other reading fairly answers |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Hebrew writing arranges subjects by correspondence; Isa. 6:10 is a clear introversion | Ch. 1 §B | Direct statement | Agreed in single verses; its use for the whole Bible must be proved pair by pair |
| 2 | The structure of a passage shows its scope, and its centre carries the emphasis | Ch. 1 §C | Reasonable inference | A pattern in verses does not prove a pattern across sixty-six books |
| 3 | The plan undoes the losses in reverse order | Ch. 2 §C | Reasonable inference | The order of some events in Rev. 20 is read differently by different schools |
| 4 | Rev. 21–22 answers Gen. 1–2: heaven and earth, river, tree of life, God dwelling with men | Ch. 3 §B–C | Direct statement | Some items (sea, night) are answered by removal; contrast is still correspondence |

| # | Argument | Where | Weight | What the other reading fairly answers |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | Member A is one very good creation, with no ruin in Gen. 1:2 | Ch. 3 §D | Strong inference | "Without form, and void" is used of desolation in Jer. 4:23 |
| 6 | Ezek. 28 and 1 Tim. 3:6 describe the adversary's fall through pride | Ch. 4 §B | Reasonable inference | Ezek. 28 is addressed to the king of Tyre |
| 7 | The adversary fell after the creation (Job 38:7) and before Gen. 3 | Ch. 4 §C | Reasonable inference | Job 38:7 is poetry; "all" may be general |
| 8 | Rev. 20:7-10 answers the first rebellion with the last | Ch. 4 §D | Strong inference | The first rebellion is inferred, not narrated |
| 9 | The earth blessed in Gen. 1–2 is restored under Christ's reign | Ch. 5 §C | Reasonable inference | The prophets' pictures could belong to the new earth instead; Isa. 65:20 favours the reign |
| 10 | Rev. 20:2 names "that old serpent" and binds the deceiver | Ch. 6 §C | Direct statement | Only the timing of the binding is disputed |
| 11 | The nations scattered at Babel are gathered, and their speech purified | Ch. 7 §C | Strong inference | "Pure language" may mean purified speech, not one tongue |
| 12 | Israel, called and fallen, is called again and saved | Ch. 8 §C | Strong inference | Some read "all Israel" as the whole people of God |
| 13 | The two comings of Christ correspond; Heb. 9:28 counts them | Ch. 9 §C | Direct statement | Only the order of events around the second coming is disputed |
| 14 | The kingdom was offered again to Israel in the Acts and refused at Acts 28 | Ch. 10 §E | Strong inference | Acts 3:19-20 may be a general call to repent |
| 15 | The Church of God begins at Pentecost; the Mystery is its fuller revelation | Ch. 10 §F | Strong inference | Bullinger began the Mystery body after Acts 28 |
| 16 | The centre pair overlaps; the turning point is the time of the Acts | Ch. 10 §G | Reasonable inference | The overlap weakens the neatness of the mirror at its centre |
| 17 | Every created order failed when it stood on its own | Ch. 11 §A | Direct statement | — |
| 18 | The plan teaches that whatever stands, stands by grace | Ch. 11 §B | Strong inference | Eph. 3:10 does not name the lesson taught |
| 19 | The seven administrations fit inside the Plan's eight pairs | Ch. 12 | Reasonable inference | Three boundaries differ (Patriarchal; the kingdom offer; the Second Coming) |
| 20 | Scripture speaks of two comings: the sufferings and the glory (1 Pet. 1:11); Jesus read only the first half of Isa. 61:2 | Ch. 9 §A | Direct statement | Only the order of events around the second coming is disputed |

| # | Argument | Where | Weight | What the other reading fairly answers |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 21 | The Church of God is a third company beside Jew and Gentile, one body with Christ as head | Ch. 10 §C | Direct statement | — |
| 22 | The Mystery, kept secret, fills the time between the two comings that the prophets did not see | Ch. 10 §D | Strong inference | The prophets did foretell blessing for the Gentiles, though not one body on equal terms |
| 23 | **Withdrawn:** a ruin between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2, with the adversary's fall placed there | App. A | Withdrawn | Bullinger's original; not supported by Gen. 1:31 or Job 38:7 |
| 24 | **Withdrawn:** "the world that then was" as a world before Gen. 1:2 | App. A | Withdrawn | 2 Pet. 3:6 identifies it as the world of the Flood |
| 25 | **Withdrawn:** the Church (the Mystery) begun after Acts 28 | App. A | Withdrawn | 1 Cor. 12:13 places the one body during the Acts |

# Sources Consulted


- **The Holy Bible, King James Version.** Every quotation in this study is from the King James Version and was checked against its text. *Primary authority.*
- **E. W. Bullinger, *The Apocalypse, or "The Day of the Lord"** *(2nd ed., 1909), "The Plan of the Ages," in this library's Revised and Updated Edition (2026).* The source of the outline; its corrections are listed in Appendix A.*
- **E. W. Bullinger, *How to Enjoy the Bible** *(1907), on structure and scope.* Method.*
- **This library: *The Seven Administrations of Scripture** *(pod-V7)*; **Genesis 1:2 and the Gap Theory Revealed**; **Sons of God — Genesis 6 Study**. Positions this study relies on and does not re-argue.*


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