

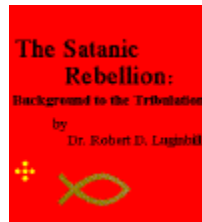
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The Satanic Rebellion: Background to the Tribulation

Part 5

Judgment, Restoration and Replacement

by Dr. Robert D. Luginbill



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Introduction: Sanctification and the Plan of God: In our previous lesson, we discussed the devil's organization, tactical plans and procedures, and his integrated system for the enslavement of humanity. We now turn our attention to God's point of view and shall see how He has been in complete control of the process of human history all along. In this final installment of the present series, we shift our focus to a chronological and strategic overview of God's plan for humanity as it moves resolutely and inexorably forward toward history's final conclusion, decisively pushing aside in the process all satanic resistance, defeating the devil at every turn until he and all the evil he represents are finally eradicated from the universe. As is the case with so many aspects of divine truth, the process of judgment, restoration and replacement, a threefold set of actions that can stand as short-hand for the plan of God overall, are themselves divisible into three distinct parts. In this respect, they parallel the believer's sanctification (see Peter #13), the process whereby an unsaved human being is restored to complete and eternal fellowship with God better than what was lost at the fall:

- Initial sanctification: in Christ, we enter into the family of God through faith in Jesus and are restored to fellowship (though the full reality of these blessings to come is yet future). Just as God restored light to the universe in Genesis 1:3, so new believers are transferred out of darkness into the light by believing in the true light of the world, Jesus Christ (Jn.8:12; Col.1:13; cf. Jn.1:5; 1:9), and so *positionally* become "light in the Lord" (Eph.5:8).
- Experiential or progressive sanctification: by following Christ, we are transformed in this life through spiritual growth toward the goal of living like restored persons in spite of the sin within us and the evil in the world around us (demonstrating thereby the power of God to His glory). Just as God sustains light in the universe as a witness in this dark world (Ps.19:1-6; 74:16; 136:7-9; Is.40:26 Jer.31:35; Rom.1:20), so as believers we are charged to continue to reflect *experientially* His light as we make our way through life (2Cor.3:18; Eph.5:8).
- Ultimate sanctification: with Christ, we are literally transformed through resurrection, bringing the process of restoration to completion (1Jn.3:2). Just as God will at the end of time replace the limited, restored light of the sun with the glory of the Son and of Himself (Rev.21:23), so we believers will *ultimately* shine forever like stars in the firmament in the Kingdom of God forever (Dan.12:3; 1Cor.15:41-43; cf. Rev.2:28).

God's overall plan of universal history is constructed in parallel fashion to this individual plan of sanctification for believers. Phase one of judgment, restoration and replacement sets the stage for restoring God's harmonious universal order in a positional way in the person of Adam (though the actual realization of this is yet future). Phase two (otherwise known as human history) is bringing about an experiential restoration in the persons of believers of all eras, and will reach its culmination in the millennial rule of Jesus Christ (where grace, truth and goodness will rule in spite of the

continued presence of sin). Phase three will see the destruction of the present material universe, the final execution of Satan and his followers, and their final replacement with perfected, resurrected human beings, along with other perfect (angelic) creatures living forever with the Father and the Son in a perfect world without spot or blemish.

I. Judgment, Restoration and Replacement I: Positional Victory (Progeny and Promise)

1. Judgment I: of Satan and the universe: Untold eons before the dawn of human history, the devil conceived and led a rebellion against God (the subject of this series). With his thinking corrupted by his own arrogance, Satan brought himself and others to believe that God would be unable (by reason of His own character and perfection) to call the devil to account (see Part 1 of this series). This attempted coup d'état was, much to Satan and his supporters' surprise, met with an overwhelming initial judgment whereby the earth, the focus of the universe and center of Satan's rebellion, was destroyed, and the entire universe blacked-out (see Part 2 of this series). The devil, along with the rest of angelic creation, was left to tremble in anticipation of what God would do next. Instead of an immediate and final termination of Satan and his followers, however, God did something that had to have come as a complete and utter surprise to all of His creatures: He re-created what had previously been destroyed.

2. Restoration I: of Earth: The ways of God are truly unknowable, and marvelously so (Rom.11:33). In all His ways, He is a God "who hides Himself" (Is.45:15; cf. Deut.29:29; Prov.25:2), who acts not as the world would expect or assume, but according to His boundless and unsearchable wisdom (Job 5:9; 11:7; Ps.139:6; Eccl.8:17; Is.40:28; Matt.11:25; Eph.3:8). Whether in blessing or in judgment, God seems to make a point of doing things in a way that makes the ears of all who hear of it "tingle" (1Sam.3:11-14; 2Kng.21:12; Jer.19:3). Our God is a God not only of unexpected judgments, but of magnificent surprises and blessed mysteries, the chief of which is Jesus Christ who now resides in all who believe in Him (Col.1:27; see also Eph.3:4-6; Col.2:2-3). The restoration of the universe in six days was just such an unanticipated, blessed event. God did not ignore Satan's rebellion (as the devil and his followers had hoped), nor did He entirely annihilate His creation (as all angelic kind must have feared). Instead, as is His wont, He did something astoundingly different, something that had never been done before (cf. Is.43:19; Jer.31:22). He re-created heaven and earth, making them habitable again, bringing illumination back to the universe with that most significant command "let there be light" (see Part 2 of this series). And, most astoundingly, He created a new type of creature, morally accountable as were the angels, but lower than they in terms of power and knowledge, a creature whose very purpose would be demonstrate the character and glory of God while replacing those who had disparaged it (see Part 3 of this series).

3. Replacement I: Adam and the Last Adam for Satan: Because of their possession of a life-span and range of knowledge beyond human comprehension, the decision of each individual angel as to whether to side with Satan or with God in the rebellion at issue

