

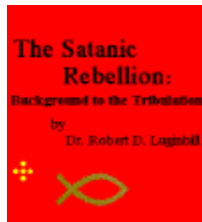
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The Satanic Rebellion: Background to the Tribulation

Part 5

Judgment, Restoration and Replacement

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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

was, for all intents and purposes, an irrevocable one (see Part 2 of this series). But God offered a last olive branch in the person of Adam (see Part 3 of this series). Coupled with the unmistakable threat of impending final judgment embodied in the destruction of earth and the universal black-out along with the promise of mercy inherent in the restoration of heaven and earth, the creation of Adam that followed was a clear signal to all who had opposed God that this was their final chance at repentance; for they could indeed be replaced after all (Job 4:18; 15:15; 25:5; 34:24). In fact, with the command to Adam and Eve to propagate and fill the earth, it would take no great effort on the part of the fallen angels to deduce that within a relatively short amount of time (especially by angelic standards) the full complement of their replacements would come to be present on the restored earth; and so their time for deliberation would soon expire. Instead of reconsidering, however, Satan wasted no time in launching an all-out effort to thwart God's plan of replacement, concluding that if only he could corrupt mankind, no further threat from this quarter would need to be feared. In the end, however, his very success merely opened the door for the promise and eventual reality of the coming of the Last Adam (1Cor.15:45), whose sacrifice would restore to life all of Adam's progeny who would choose to believe in Him.

4. Satan's Reaction: The temptation and fall of Adam and Eve: The devil's temptation of Eve (and the subsequent fall of Adam as a result: see Part 3 of this series), was a textbook display of Satan's use of deception and of the anatomy of his most potent weapon, the lie (see Part 4 of this series). By leading our first parents into sin, the devil assumed that their corruption (and the inevitable corruption of all of their offspring) meant that mankind would forever be useless as potential replacements for himself and his followers. But God, all along, had planned a way to restore His human *progeny* through the *promise* of His Son, Jesus Christ. At the judgment in Eden, Eve is told that her progeny (Jesus Christ, and, in Him, all those who will choose for God) will be opposed to the devil's seed (most prominently antichrist, but including all those who choose against God), and that her Seed (the Savior of the world), will crush his head (i.e., achieve the ultimate victory over Satan and his antichrist and all who follow them). This victory would not be without cost, as the prophecy of the crushed heel foretells, speaking as it does of the price He would pay by His death on the cross for all our sakes (also prefigured in the coats of skin in Genesis 3.21 and in ritual animal sacrifice in general). By returning to God, saved human kind would in this way regain more than had originally been lost. For through the promised resurrection to come, elect mankind will not only become superior to angelic kind in every way, but will come to possess eternal life which can never again be compromised or called into question. The greatest blessing to rise forth out of the curse of Genesis chapter three, however, is the promise and the (present) reality of Jesus Christ. For in the wake of the death sentence Man brought upon himself by his own sin, God brought eternal life out of death through the death of His Son. This sacrifice, the true cost of which we can only dimly comprehend this side of heaven, demonstrated beyond any possible question or doubt the love of God for His creatures, for He sacrificed what was dearest to Him for our sake, despite our sin against Him. Just as God would not abandon His angelic creation, but restored the universe (even going so far as to offer His fallen creatures a second chance through the creation of Adam), so in the person of Jesus Christ, so far from not giving up on us, God has actually wed Himself to His creation for the sake of mankind. For in the person of

Christ, true humanity has been inseparably and irrevocably united with undiminished deity, so that there can be no further doubt about His commitment to all His creatures who have chosen for Him:

For God loved the world so much, that he gave His only beloved Son, in order that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have eternal life.

John 3:16

Such is the blinding and ineffable glory of God. Instead of blistering judgment, in His matchless grace He offers mercy to all who will but receive it of Him in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is thus the key to all human history, because in Him is the only solution to the sentence of death mankind has willfully placed over its own head, and because in Him deity and humanity have been joined forevermore, guaranteeing beyond all doubt the absolute solidity of the promise of eternal life through His name. For through Him we have become eternally united to Him forevermore:

- As partakers of the divine nature (2Pet.1:4).
- In fellowship with Him and the Father (1Jn:1:3).
- As His bride (Eph.5:25-32; Rev.19:7).
- For we have been baptized into His person (nothing to do with water: Matt.28:19; Rom.6:3-11; 1Cor.12:13; Gal.3:27).
- And are in Him (Jn.14:20; Matt.28:19).
- Inseparably united with Him (Rom.6:5).
- As He is in us (Jn.14:20; Rom.8:10; 2Cor.13:5; Gal.2:20; Eph.3:17; Col.1:27).
- Until God becomes all in all (1Cor.15:28).

II. The Plan of God in Human History

Long before it ever entered Satan's mind to draw our first parents into sin, God's plan for all people throughout the entire course of what would be known as human history to follow had already been determined, namely, salvation through the incarnation and sacrificial death of His beloved Son. Indeed, one cannot even speak about God's plan for mankind without mentioning Jesus Christ in the same breath. For in the name and in the person of Jesus, God's entire will for the human race is given its full expression, and

