

New Heavens and New Earth

The Futures of Physical and Spiritual Israel

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Even though I know that God does not relate to time in the same way that we do, I nonetheless marvel at His patience looking forward to the complete fulfillment of this day. I have alluded to what this day represents at least one time in a previous sermon; but there is more, much more, than what I said then.

I want to give us a bit of an insight. I want to help us to be impressed with a concept that reveals somewhat the scope of God's mind. He does not do things in a haphazard way that is in any way dependent upon our reaction. He is in absolute control.

Hebrews 4:3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as He said, "As I have sworn in My wrath, if they shall enter into My rest," although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

I want to reinforce that concept just a little bit by showing some other scriptures. I want to show you that, whoever the author of the book of Hebrews was, he was not way out on a limb when he said the works were finished from before the foundation of the earth.

Ephesians 1:4 [The apostle Paul says:] According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

He had that all planned out. He knew where He was headed.

II Timothy 1:8-9 Be not you therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner: but be you partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

Paul was not the only one who wrote about this.

I Peter 1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

That ties right into Ephesians 1: 4, but Peter makes this very clear in verses 18-20.

I Peter 1:18-20 Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation [conduct], received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.

Those four or five verses together essentially mean that, at the very least, the major steps involved in His plan—and most assuredly the overall purpose and final goal—were already determined before the earth was ever created.

Now, how long ago was that? It was previously suggested by the scientists who look into these things that the earth gave indication of being four billion years old. But recently I heard a program that mentioned that it might be in excess of ten billion years old. For mankind, it has only been about 6,000 years since Adam and Eve.

In regard to time, and having a goal I want to accomplish, I know that my proclivity is to get on with what I want to do immediately. I can hardly wait to see what I want accomplished done and over with, so that I can enjoy the fruits of my labor.

Men really do not know the age of the earth. At best, it is an educated guess. But they toss figures like "billions," and even "trillions," around as if we can somehow comprehend them. How long is a second? It is just a blink of an eye. One billion, though, is so large a figure that it is difficult for us to grasp that it takes 31 years and 9 months to consume one billion seconds. One trillion is one thousand billion. So we have to add three zeros on to that. Thus, one trillion seconds ago was almost 32,000 years ago!

One thing I know for sure is that God's operations are huge! So huge are the distances involved in space that scientists measure them in light years. A single light year is the distance that light travels in one year's time while moving at the rate of 86,000 miles per second. That is over 5 million miles in one minute, and 309 million in one hour. The nearest star, other than our sun, is 4.6 light years distance.

I do not know how far the edge of heaven is; but I do know that God has populated it with billions of galaxies, each containing roughly (so say the star gazers) 100 billion stars. How many planets spin their way around those stars must be beyond counting.

Hebrews 1:1-3 God, who at sundry times and in divers [different] manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things [Hang on to that thought.], by whom also He made the worlds [or, the ages]; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

I began this sermon as I did because I want us to be impressed by the One who sits at the controls of the creation, because we are involved with Him in an intimate and personal relationship. He is our Creator, Savior, High Priest, soon coming King and Husband. And it is a measure of our foolish childishness to give such little concern about His reality and to somehow ignore the consequences of our attitudes and conduct.

Can an intimate relationship be symbolized by anything closer than a marriage? Our Husband-to-be sits at the right hand of the Father who created all things through Him. Together They are working out the plan They had completed before the actual work began, and They are working towards what this day [The Last Great Day] prophetically symbolizes. And what this day signifies is huge too!

Demographers estimate that some 40-50 billion humans have trod the earth and died since Adam and Eve. That 50 billion, though, is a tiny figure compared to the huge numbers of galaxies, stars, and planets. However, all of those heavenly bodies are nothing more than inanimate creations. But those 40-50 billion who have trod the earth have been living humans in the image of God.

How much is a human life as a potential God-being worth? The value of even one "God" is greater than all that He has made and all that He is. And we are talking here about potentially billions of them.

John 7:37-39 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, "If any many thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believes on Me, as the scripture has said, 'Out of His belly shall flow rivers of living water.'" (But this spoke He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

When you think about 40 or 50 billion potential Gods and what this day means, it is no wonder that it is called the Last Great Day. It is great! It is awesome! It is mind numbing! It is huge in its implications. But, by contrast, it is very easy for us to feel overlooked; to feel lost or insignificant in the 5 billion or so throng living on earth today.

Just in case you do not think that you matter, look again at the testimony of some who have gone before us—to understand another aspect of the immense capacity of God's mind. Even if this is understood only in terms of what we understand as the present size of God's Family, what we are going to read reflects a Mind of amazing capacity.

Let us first go to Psalm 139, where we are going to read 18 verses. Try to hang on to some of the concepts that the author is speaking of. This is attributed to David, and it certainly sounds to me like something that he would write. He loved God, and he thought about God often—meditated on His word constantly, and looked forward to the time when he too would be in that Kingdom and he too would have some of the capacity that he reveals in the mind of God.

Psalm 139:1-2 O LORD, you have searched me, and know me. You know my downsitting and mine uprising, You understand my thought afar off.

Now consider that the population in David's day was undoubtedly a great deal smaller and how many more children God had, I do not know. But certainly David was one of His children. Put yourself in David's place. Surely God's family has spread out, expanded somewhat, since David's time. But that God was able to concentrate His mind not only on David but on other things that were going on in His creation as well is mind-boggling. We see the intricacy and complexity of God knowing David.

Psalm 139:3 You compass my path and my lying down?

Actually, that word "compass" means comprehend. He already knew, as it were, where David was headed.

Psalm 139:3-13 You compass my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, You know it altogether. You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Where shall I go from Your spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your presence? If I ascend up into heaven, You are there. If I make my bed in hell [the grave], behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me [up]. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me;" even the night shall be light about me. Yes, the darkness hides not from You; but the night shines as the day. The darkness and the light are both alike to You. For You have possessed my reins: You have covered me in my mother's womb.

That begins to show us that His knowledge of David went back far beyond when he was born.

Psalm 139:14-18 I will praise You; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are Your works; and that my soul knows right well. My substance was not hid from You, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in Your book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with You.

What a mind! Are we to understand that He only kept track of David like this? Surely we are to understand that He is keeping track of you and me like this as well. There is not only power that is revealed in this, but love and patience that He has with us. And He is able to keep track of His children. He knows what is going on in their lives—from before birth to right on down to now. As great as the other operations that He is tending, all He has made, He knows us individually—inside and out, up and down, from top to bottom.

Isaiah had something similar to say. It is brief. At the time it was written, it was directly applied to the nations of Israel (Judah really); but it applies to you and me too. Zion can apply to Jerusalem, or we can apply the spiritual aspects to the church. Sometimes we say things like this.

Isaiah 49:14-16 But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me." Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she would not have compassion on the son of her womb? [God admits:] Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have graven you upon the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me.

Do not we at times feel detached from Him—thinking He is unaware, that He does not notice, that He does not see our plight, that He does not understand our feelings, or He does not care about them? All of us feel that way from time to time. But in His Word He is shown pleading, watching, guiding, waiting to see what kind of choices we will make. These choices help form us into what we will be.

Hebrews 4:11 Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

That is, the example of Israel in the wilderness. And then a reason is given.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is quick [living], and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

I do not know whether you realize it or not, but this is a New Testament parallel of Psalm 139. It is compressed, to be sure; but it is nonetheless saying exactly the same thing.

Hebrews 4:13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

These verses speak of the One we deal with. The "word of God" here is two things. First, it indicates Jesus Christ. The proof of this is in verse 13, where the pronouns "His" and "Him" are used along with the noun "eyes" to refer the reader to verse 12, so that one will understand

that the Word of God is God. Clearly, in these two verses, the primary focus is on a Being. This is the One with whom we have to do.

Secondarily, it is used of the Bible. It too is the Word of God. At the time that this was written, it specifically referred to the Old Testament. But now the New Testament is also included. This particular use is for the practical day-to-day studying, meditating, instruction in righteousness, spiritual cleansing, and understanding that we need in order to be useful in God's Family.

So we have two things going on here at once. Our God and High Priest, our Savior, our Husband-to-be is alive; and He fits the description there (in these two verses). But we also have the word of God to read from—so that we can understand Him, His mind, and His purpose that much better.

I introduced this subject in this way because there are times when we appreciate neither the immensity of the power and the abilities and also the loving generosity of God's mind nor the greatness of our inheritance with Christ. Remember I John 3: 1-3. We are going to be like Him!

You will recall that I spent some time, during my sermon on the first holy day, on the rest of God. The word "rest" is a code word that the ancient Israelites adopted to keep the promises in mind. The author of Hebrews then used that word to encourage and stimulate our thinking about the fact that this promise—made to Abraham—still awaits the people of God. Israel's entering the Promised Land under Joshua was merely a tiny, tiny, miniscule shadow (or type) of what we are going to inherit.

In that sermon, I carried the fulfillment of that as far as inheriting the earth. Even inheriting the earth is awesome to contemplate. But is it possible that there is even more? Do you recall that this very book that we are in right now—Hebrews—opened by stating that Jesus is appointed heir of all things. And, in other places, it informs us that we are co-heirs with Him.

We are going to take a look at some of the events prophesied to occur from this point out, so we will at least have an overview. As we begin, also understand that all of this we are about to see is a part of the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham and to his descendants—Israel and Judah (the physical nations) and the church of God (the spiritual one).

I will go over a little bit of what John Reid went over the other day to try to approach it from this particular standpoint that we are involved with right here. I am going to go back to Revelation 20 to set the springboard and the time.

Revelation 20:1-6 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 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. 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. (But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Here we have an overview of the first resurrection. I am not going to go into every detail covered here, but there is enough to show that those in the first resurrection—the firstfruits—are going to receive authority to govern and also be spiritual leaders.

Revelation 5:10 And have made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

This perfectly agrees with Revelation 20, because those in the first resurrection were on thrones; and it also said that they would be priests. The pronoun "us" here is written from the standpoint of the author, John. Thus "us" refers to John and to his brethren—the children of God, the firstfruits.

Revelation 19:16 And He [Jesus Christ] has on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

Christ is a King of kings. That is a superlative. But also, in its practical sense, it means that there are other kings—others with governing authority—who are under Him; and He has the greatest authority of all.

Putting these several scriptures together, those in the first resurrection will be the kings under Christ, the King of kings. Since He is also High Priest, I might add (although the Bible does not state it directly), He is High Priest of priests; and those in the first resurrection will be the priests under Him.

Revelation 14:1-4 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sang as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

Another reason I bring that up is this seems to be the extent of those who will be in the first resurrection—144,000—as God begins to build His Family, His Kingdom. Christ will be ruling over earth; and the firstfruits, those who are in the first resurrection, will be sharing that rule with Him and will be His agents—carrying out His purpose.

Now, over whom will they rule? In order to understand this, we must step back in time before the resurrection to the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. The prophecy in Jeremiah 30 sets the stage for the events that immediately precede Christ's return by at least 1260 days. That is the minimum.

Jeremiah 30:1-3 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, "Thus speaks the Lord God of Israel, saying, 'Write you all the words that I have spoken unto you in a book. For, lo, the days come,' says the Lord, 'that I will bring again...

That is saying that there was a time when He brought these people into captivity in the past. So this is, at least, a second time.

Jeremiah 30:3 ...the captivity of My people Israel and Judah,' says the Lord: 'and [He carries it further.] I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.'

At "bring again" my margin says "bring back from captivity." So, even as this prophecy begins, God is already showing a gathering of Israel and Judah—both nations that are pictured in the prophecy—as separate nations. The implication is that Israel and Judah are separated before going into captivity. We see this condition already in existence in our time. But the prophecy moves on because, after verse 3, he states that this is the time of Jacob's trouble.

Jeremiah 30:4-7 And these are the words that the Lord spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus says the Lord: "We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask you now, and see whether a man does travail with child? Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it."

This is the worse thing that Israel and Judah have ever gone through, and it still lays ahead. There is no comparable period of time in the history of those people.

Jeremiah 30:7 "It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it."

It is interesting that God switched names from "Israel and Judah" to "Jacob's." Jacob is the name that is used prophetically by God, and sometimes historically as well, to indicate both nations at the same time. They began as one. They split. They are still split. But here, in this prophecy, He is showing that they are both going to be caught at the same time, in the same trouble—Jacob's trouble!

Both of them are going to be crushed by attacks from foreign nations, following being weakened by a series of internal problems. We are not going to go into every aspect of this; but I am talking about weather problems, disease problems. It may even include internal disunity problems, because both nations will suffer from internal civil strife. Both nations will be driven from their homelands and scattered in nations foreign to them, and I will give you proof of that.

Jeremiah 29:14 "And I will be found of you," says the Lord. "And I will turn away your captivity [He is still talking about the same people, and actually the same period of time.], and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whether I have driven you," says the Lord. "And I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive."

The people of Israel and Judah—Jacob together—are both going to be driven into captivity. Right now, there is no doubt at all but that Israel of the two is a very, very powerful nation. The only way that it can be brought down, really, is internally. There are multitudes of ways we can be brought down internally so that we will be much easier pickings than we otherwise would be.

Isaiah 11:11-12 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall be left, [And here He specifically identifies some nations where the Israelitish people will be captive, giving the ancient names of these countries.] from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the see. And He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

That is very clear. Assemble for the second time the outcasts of Israel from the four corners of the earth. So we know now that this scattering is going to be earth-wide in scope. But when does the gathering begin? The Bible gives us a general time for when it is going to start. In the prophecy in Hosea, they are already in their captivity. God says through Hosea:

Hosea 5:14 For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion?

When Ephraim is used, it is a code word for Israel—since Ephraim, at the time, was the dominant tribe.

Hosea 5:14-6:2 For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah. [There they are, Israel and Judah, again.] I, even I, will tear and go away [There is the going into captivity.]; I will take away, and none shall rescue him. I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek My face. In their affliction they will seek Me early. [There is hope.] Come, and let us return unto the Lord. For He has torn, and He will heal us. He has smitten, and He will bind us up. After two days [A day in prophecy fulfilled is one year.] will He revive us: In the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight.

The rescue of Jacob—the rescue of Israel and Judah—will begin sometime in the third year of their captivity. Just in case we might think these prophecies may apply to some other time, or that they might have been fulfilled some time in the past:

Jeremiah 30:24 The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return, until He have done it, and until He have performed the intents of His heart; in the latter days you shall consider it.

He is not talking about a former time. This is something for "the latter days." Those latter days are yet ahead of us in terms of this prophecy.

Jeremiah 31:1-2 "At the same time [in the latter days]," says the Lord, "will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people." [It is not that way yet.] Thus says the Lord, "The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest."

You certainly would not be at rest in captivity. But sometime in that third year God is going to begin to move dramatically. He is going to begin to grant the Israelitish people repentance, and they are going to open their hearts and minds to Him. They are going to begin to turn to Him because they will be caused to remember some of the things from the time before, when they heard the Word of God. Somehow, someway, that instruction has been there. God has seen to that. And He will begin to bring it to mind.

Jeremiah 31:3-7 The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love. Therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you. Again I will build you [They had been destroyed, but He is going to build them again.], and you shall be built, O virgin of Israel. You shall again be adorned with your tabrets, and shall go forth in the dances of them that make merry. You shall yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria. The planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things. For there shall be a day that the

watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, 'Arise you, and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God.'" For thus says the Lord: "Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: Publish you, praise you, and say, 'O Lord, save Your people, the remnant of Israel.'"

Then this begins to show where they are scattered again.

Jeremiah 31:8-14 "Behold, I will bring them from the north country [Remember that all directions are given from Jerusalem unless otherwise specified.], and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travails with child together: a great company shall return thither. And they shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in the straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. Hear the word of the Lord, O you nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, 'He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd does his flock.' For the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd. And their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness," says the Lord.

Jeremiah 30:8-10 "For it shall come to pass in that day," says the Lord of hosts, "that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and will burst your bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him. But they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore fear you not, O my servant Jacob," says the Lord; "neither be dismayed, O Israel. For, lo, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid."

This makes it absolutely certain that this time lies just before us. David is going to be resurrected when all of us will be resurrected. So we are talking about something that lies just before us. Where will they go, when God rescues?

Jeremiah 30:3 "For, lo, the days come," says the Lord, "that I will bring again the captivity of My people Israel and Judah," says the Lord. "And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it."

There is no other place that they will be taken at first except the area of Jerusalem—the area which was given to Abraham—from the river Nile and the Mediterranean Sea eastward to the Tigris and Euphrates valley. You can write down Jeremiah 23: 1-8 because that series of verses encapsulates just about everything; but it also, again, clarifies even more clearly what the time element will be. That is, when Jesus Christ will be King over David; and that includes all of the kings mentioned in Revelation 15 and so forth.

So, they go back there. What happens then?

Isaiah 2:1-4 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days [the latter days], that the mountain [nation] of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills [smaller nations]; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, "Come you, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people. And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

What we are seeing here is like a pebble being dropped into a nice, smooth, still pond. Israel is established in the area of Jerusalem. They come under the government of God. And once the regathered Israelites are beginning to settle into their homeland, the expansions—the ripples—begin to go out from there. The expansion of God's government over other nations also begins.

We can see from Isaiah 2: 3 that people will be attracted to Israel by their example of both physical and spiritual prosperity. They will travel to Israel to find out what makes it tick. Why are all these good things happening? Israel will share their knowledge, their understanding, and their spiritual prosperity especially. And the people will discover that the reason is in Israel's relationship with God.

Isaiah 43:3-5 "For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you. Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you. Therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life. Fear not, for I am with you. I will bring your seed from the east,

and gather you from the west."

You can see the time element here. It fits right in.

Isaiah 43:6-11 "I will say to the north, 'Give up;' and to the south, 'Keep not back.' Bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by My name. For I have created him for My glory, I have formed him; yes, I have made him." Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled. Who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring forth their witness, that they may be justified. Or let them hear, and say, "It is truth." "You are My witnesses," says the Lord, "and My servant whom I have chosen: that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there is no God formed, neither shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside Me there is no savior."

Israel is going to witness to the nations. This is what God originally intended that they fulfill, when He brought them out of Egypt under Moses; but they would not do it. Then they will. You can see again that this clearly applies to something yet future.

John Reid gave you the scriptures in Ezekiel 47, which shows the water coming out from under the temple of God. And everywhere it goes, a huge river flows out from under there; and it heals whatever it touches. That is a type of God's Holy Spirit also emanating from the same place. Even as the physical things are healed, people's minds are also healed.

So Christ returns. The reconstruction begins. Israel begins to grow into a great and wonderful nation, and shares its knowledge of God with the other nations around the world. This goes on for a thousand years. Then:

Revelation 20:7-10 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. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city; and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are [or, were cast], and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.

It seems incredible, but some are still going to be so hardened—even after a thousand years of God ruling through Jesus Christ. They are hardened and easily deceived. Then they weed

themselves out of God's purpose—taking up Satan's side, and fighting against God. They, of course, will lose—even as Satan has lost every battle with God. But these things that we are seeing here reveal God's justification for putting him and his followers into the Lake of Fire.

He is showing that they cannot be changed, any more than Satan can be changed. They have the same mindset he does and would repeatedly rebel—even though surrounded, indeed immersed, in the blessings God alone is able to give.

Revelation 20:11-12 And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

Then comes the second resurrection. That is what is being spoken of here, in verses 11-12. The second resurrection was alluded to in verse 6 with the mention of the word "first." If there is a first, there must be at least a second. Here is the second. It is a resurrection to physical life of all humans who have ever been born and died without knowledge of the truth.

How can we know this? The answer here could get quite complex and involve the use of a lot of scriptures. But there is a foundational principle that is found in II Peter 3:9, which says that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

There is only one opportunity for everybody. We are having ours right now, and we must not waste it on mere vanities. These people coming up in the second resurrection, I again believe, are going to overwhelmingly accept God's purpose and devote their lives to pleasing Him once they have the truth about God reproducing Himself and what our inheritance is. Then, life will make sense to them; and it will have an overriding purpose.

You can write down Isaiah 65:19-20. I want you to understand that, at best, these verses only hint that God is going to give them a fair opportunity to grow and overcome. I say "hint" because, in the wider context of this paragraph that these verses appear in, it appears to be more directly tied to the Millennium than to the Last Great Day.

We know this: Revelation 20:12 confirms that when these people are made alive—all in the second resurrection—they are then going to be judged out of the books. That is, all of the standards that are written in the entire Bible—just as you and I are experiencing today in the time of our calling. God is going to judge them in the same way that He is judging us. He is giving us plenty of time to accumulate knowledge and understanding, and to put it to work in our lives. This all fits within the doctrine of eternal judgment.

In addition to that, that verse says that the Book of Life is opened. This is also mentioned incidentally in Revelation 3:5; and it is an important context there because it shows that those Christians will have their names written in the Book of Life if they overcome. That is exactly what is happening here in Revelation 20:12. These people are being judged. They are responding to God. And the Book of Life is opened so that their names can be entered in.

They had not been judged before. That is the only conclusion that can rightly be reached there. These are people who never had an opportunity for salvation. And it clearly infers that these people went into the grave not having had an opportunity for salvation. They lived and died in ignorance of God's purpose. Thus, they had no opportunity to prepare; and this will be their opportunity.

As God's purpose unfolds, you can see a pattern here. It opens the knowledge of God to more and more people. The 144,000 and all of those millions of people during the Millennium; and then we begin to see billions of people in the second resurrection, when all of those people who died without ever having an opportunity get to have their opportunity. Do you see how things are expanding out, more and more? As God goes along, He trains people to assist Him in this process.

The firstfruits are, by comparison, even to those who will come up in the Millennium, a very tiny group. And those who come up in the Millennium will live and die in the Millennium, following the first resurrection. They will be a much larger group. And finally this group is so large that I honestly believe the entire Millennium will be spent preparing for that resurrection.

You might wonder how the earth could hold that many people—40 to 50 billion at one time. But again, I have read of demographers with no connection at all to the church (as far as I know, no connection at all to the Bible) who say that, when you look at the earth and all of those places that are barren right now—the Sahara Desert, the Gobi Desert, the great western desert in the United States, all of those places that are uninhabitable—if they got rain and they got the right kind of weather, and the soil was fertile; believe it or not, they said the earth can easily hold 40 billion people. Easily!

We are not done yet. To me it gets more exciting.

Revelation 20:13-14 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [the grave] delivered up the dead which were in them. And they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell [the grave] were cast into the lake of fire.

Why were they cast into the Lake of Fire? The answer is easy. They are no longer needed. Nobody is ever going to die again.

Revelation 20:14 This is the second death.

That is the third resurrection, there in verse 14. Notice also that he mentioned the Lake of Fire.

II Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Did you see that? The whole earth is going to burn up. Not just one little spot on earth, but the whole earth is going to burn up—and heaven too.

II Peter 3:11-12 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation [conduct] and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved [disappear], and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

When you dissolve something in a glass of water, it disappears. He is talking about the heavens disappearing.

II Peter 3:13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.

Romans 8:16-17 The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ...

Remember, Christ is going to inherit everything. We are joint-heirs with Him. So we are going to inherit everything. He is going to share that with us.

Romans 8:17-21 ...if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For [Here comes an explanation.] the earnest expectation of the creature [creation] waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature [creation] was made subject to vanity [futility, decay, nothingness], not willingly, but by reason of Him [God, who planned this from the very beginning] who has subjected the same in hope, because the creature [creation] itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption [decay] into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

What is that "glorious liberty of the children of God" going to include? You are going to have [eternal] bodies and minds. Nothing in you will ever decay. Nothing will ever be done in futility.

Romans 8:22 For we know that the whole creation...

Here Paul personifies or makes the creation alive, as it were—thinking and experiencing pain.

Romans 8:22-23 ...groans and travails in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit,

even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

Hebrews 1:10-11 And, You, Lord, in the beginning have laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Your hands. They shall perish?

We know they are going to get burned up. They are going to dissolve.

Hebrews 1:11 They shall perish; but You remain...

Obviously, the earth as it is now—and we, as we are now—are not like God. God remains.

Hebrews 1:11-12 ...and they all shall wax old as does a garment; and as a vesture shall You fold them up, and they shall be changed; but You are the same, and Your years shall not fail.

Paul personifies the entire creation so that if it could think and feel, it would groan with what it has to endure. It was purposefully made subject to decay. But decay is something that God Himself never does. He never gets weary. He does not grow old. But the creation is looking forward to a time and occasion that occurs to it when the sons of God are revealed.

So a creation that decays is not something that God would ever provide for Himself and His Family to live in permanently, because it does not fit Their natures; and neither will it fit the nature of His children. The earth as it is now fits the nature of humankind. The good news for the personified creation is that freedom from this intense subjugation to decay is on its way, so that it will be relieved of its pain.

Even as the children of God are going to be glorified, so also is the creation going to receive a measure of glorification. Like the children, the new creation will never weary or grow old, following its delivery from birth pangs. And those birth pangs are the parallel of what the children have gone through.

God is showing us that this present earth—universe—is not a suitable inheritance for His children. You can begin to see that we are not going to inherit the earth as it is. It is junk compared to what God is going to give us. The earth is stained with all the corruption of sin.

Revelation 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away?

They dissolved. God burned them up; and the ashes and the dust He just blew away—away from this universe.

Revelation 21:1-5 ?and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven,

prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle [the booth] of God [the house of God] is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." And He that sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said unto me, "Write: for these words are true and faithful."

Notice the next words He says:

Revelation 21:6 And He said unto me, "It is done."

That is it. The work that He began before the foundation of the world—boom, it is over. I would have put an exclamation point there. He put a period. Then He follows it up by saying:

Revelation 21:6 "I am the Alpha and Omega [the first and the last], the beginning and the end."

Now, let me give you a summary:

1. God's plans were finished before He ever began.
2. He then created angels to assist Him in carrying out that plan.
3. He then created the universe we now live in, so the angels could be trained and tested.
4. After a measure of training, He established Satan and one-third of the angels on earth to prepare it for the creation of man.
5. One-third of the angels rebelled, and went to war against God, and severely damaged much of the universe.
6. God then repaired the damaged universe and made it suitable for mankind to live, be trained, and tested in.
7. Just like Satan and his demons, mankind has rebelled. Before the Tribulation and Day of the Lord are over, mankind will have succeeded in creating a great deal of destruction of the earth.
8. Regardless of mankind's rebellion, God's purpose goes on.
9. Following the Millennium and the 2nd and 3rd resurrections, God will completely destroy this present universe.
10. Following that, He will create a new heaven and a new earth, move His capitol city here, and planet Earth will be permanent headquarters of everything that God has created and the launching pad for all that lies beyond in God's great purpose.

Hebrews 11:35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and

others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.

I am not sure of all the author is referring to by "a better resurrection." There is no doubt that at least one resurrection is better than the two that follow it. It is the one that we are called to. There is a great deal on the line in our lives, and how we spend what remains may very well tell which resurrection we are going to be in.

The future that has been offered us is great. There is every reason for giving our all, holding back nothing, and sacrificing whatever we must do in order to overcome, please, and glorify God, and be in that better resurrection.