

END-TIMES ISSUES



#146 God plans for the future.

GOD DOESN'T TELL US TO KNOW ALL THE END-TIME DETAILS. HE TELLS US TO **BE READY.**

A N D B E Y O N D I

We have seen...

What it means to be a follower of Jesus.

- **How it is connected to:** Repentance, trust, obedience.
- **How it changes:** Our values, desires and interests, our conduct.
- **How it progresses:** From a "new-born" follower, to a fully mature "grown-up," as we go through the various struggles and "growing pains" of spiritual life.
- **How the world and our own "flesh":** Try to stop us from succeeding.
- **How God is involved:** Changing us, protecting us, embedding within us both the desire and the ability to do his will; guaranteeing eventual success and ultimate perfection *in Christ*.

★ **YET THERE IS EVEN MORE TO IT THAN THIS!** ★

IF YOU ARE FOLLOWING JESUS...

★ **GOD PLANNED ALL THIS GOOD FOR YOU EVEN BEFORE TIME AND CREATION CAME INTO EXISTENCE!** ★

As the world around you chooses to follow the evil one, **God is fulfilling his plan of love for you, and is at work in you, changing you into someone who chooses to follow him!**

(Otherwise, you would have chosen to follow the evil one, just like so many people around you have done.)

HERE IS WHAT HE DID!

**Before the world ever existed...
Before time ever existed... } GOD was already at work!**

- **Before the world existed:** God chose us *in Christ*, to be holy and blameless in his presence!
 - ✓ It's "in Christ," because on our own, we would *choose* to be sinners... and sinners can *never* survive in God's presence.

For He chose us in Him **before the foundation of the world** to be **holy and blameless in His presence.**

Ephesians 1:4 (BSB)

- **Before the beginning of time:** God promised us eternal life.
 - ✓ Verse 1 shows us that this confident hope is linked to ① faith (trust) in God, and ② knowledge of the truth that *leads to godliness*.

... in the hope of **eternal life**, which **God, who cannot lie, promised before time began.**

Titus 1:2 (BSB)

- **Before time began:** God gave us *grace in Christ*, so that later (when we came into existence), we would be saved and be called to a holy life.
 - ✓ It was because of *his* kindness (grace) and because *he* wanted to (*his* purpose), not because of anything *we* had done (we didn't exist then)!

He has **saved** us and **called us to a holy calling**, not because of our works, but by **His own purpose** and by **the grace He granted** us in Christ Jesus **before time began.**

2 Timothy 1:9 (BSB)

- **Since the creation of the world:** God has prepared a kingdom for us.
 - ✓ To us, the kingdom may still be in the process of being formed; but to God, it's already an accomplished fact!

Then the King will say to those on His right, "Come, you who are blessed by My Father, **inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.**"

Matthew 25:34 (BSB)

Because all these things were "pre-planned" by God, we can say...

- **We were predestined: to be adopted into sonship.**
 - ✓ It was because *he* desired it and *he* was pleased to do it; and it would result in praise for his glorious grace, which is freely given us in Jesus Christ (v. 6).

In love **he predestined us for adoption to sonship** through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Ephesians 1:4b-6 (NIV)

- **We were predestined: according to his plan.**
 - ✓ The end result would be the praise of his glorious nature – his splendor and majesty.

In Him [= Christ] we were also **chosen as God's own**, having been **predestined according to the plan** of Him who works out everything by the counsel of His will, ... **for the praise of His glory.**

Ephesians 1:11, 12b (BSB)

- **We were predestined: to be conformed to the image of God's son.**
✓ God has planned every aspect of our salvation, from start to finish.

For those God foreknew he also **predestined** to be **conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he **predestined**, he also **called**; those he called, he also **justified**; those he justified, he also **glorified**.

Romans 8:29-30 (NIV)

- ✓ This is the reason we can confidently **know** that God will use *all things that happen* in order to accomplish good in our lives! As the verse before this says:

And we know that **in all things** **God works for the good of those who love him**, who have been **called according to his purpose**.

Romans 8:28 (NIV)

VERSE 28 SAYS... » He **called** us (as mentioned in v. 29+).
» We **love** him. (This is something that only genuine followers of Jesus can do.)

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Our "living-out" of this is the result of God's "secret" wisdom, which is now revealed (but was planned before time began).

- **Before time began: God destined this wisdom – a previously-hidden mystery – to result in our glory!** (This is referring to our glorification.)

No, we declare **God's wisdom**, a mystery that has been hidden and that God **destined for our glory before time began**.

1 Corinthians 2:7 (NIV)

- **Within the context of 1 Corinthians: This wisdom refers to the Good News** – not just its *facts*, but also the *changes* it causes in us, both as individuals and as a group. When we consider the *greater* context of 1 Corinthians, we can describe it this way:

"Before time began, God destined us to live-out the wisdom of the Good News - adopting the values of Christ (through the 'renewed mind' of Romans 12:2) and expressing those values in the way we live. This would result in spiritual maturity and eventual glorification. All this is because of our union with Christ - a union that brings us all together as one, both Jew and Gentile."

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★ **There is a lot that happens *now*, before our future glorification!** ★

In addition to God's sovereign purposes – his wonderful plans for us – there is also *human responsibility*.

Look again at the definition we gave regarding this wisdom from God:

"Before time began, God destined us [= sovereignty]
to live-out the wisdom of the Good News – [= responsibility]
adopting the values of Christ (through the 'renewed mind' of Romans 12:2) [= responsibility]
and expressing those values in the way we live. [= responsibility]
This would result in spiritual maturity and eventual glorification. [= both]
All this is because of our union with Christ. [= sovereignty]
a union that brings us all together as one, both Jew and Gentile." [= both]

★ God also expects us to express love to God and neighbor – which includes sharing this life-altering Good News with others! ★

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★ **FOR ANY OF THIS TO HAPPEN, JESUS HAD TO BE INVOLVED.** ★

And his involvement began **BEFORE THE WORLD WAS CREATED!**

It was at the same "time" that God was planning all the wonderful things he had in store for us!

★ **For context, we need to realize what Jesus' situation originally was.** ★

- **Before the creation of the world: Jesus shared glory with the Father, and was loved by the Father.**

... the glory I had with You before the world existed.

Father, I want those You have given Me to be with Me where I am, that they may **see the glory You gave Me because You loved Me before the foundation of the world**.

John 17:5b, 17 (BSB)

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- ✓ The passage in John 17 (previous page) was from Jesus' prayer, the night before he would be put to death, to pay for our sins. He was about to accomplish all that was necessary to make *our* salvation possible.

It was within this context – loved and glorified – that the following would happen. Jesus would, for a moment, *lose* that love and glory, and experience a humiliating death, as the sacrifice for our sins. *This did not occur by accident, but was planned before creation came into existence!*

- **Before the creation of the world: Jesus was chosen to be the sacrifice for our sins.**

- ✓ This fact was not fully revealed until Jesus came to earth and did it.

... **you were redeemed** ... with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

1 Peter 1:18b-20 (NIV)

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★ **What can we conclude? ★**

- **In one way or another, everything we have seen is connected to Jesus Christ!**

- ✓ **All these promises/guarantees belong to followers of Jesus – to those who are united with Christ. They belong to nobody else.**

» All of them happened *before* we even came into existence. We did not know it, or experience it at that "time before time"!

» This is the "sovereignty" aspect of salvation. Though it was planned *before* time and space existed, Jesus is accomplishing all that is necessary for it to happen *in* time and space! (This includes what he did on the cross, the resurrection, and what he is now doing in our lives.)

- ✓ **Yet there is also a "human responsibility" aspect in salvation. (Sovereignty and responsibility go together, never in conflict.)**

» If we *are* willing to follow Jesus, then all these things will apply to us. If we *aren't* willing, they won't apply. It's as simple as that.

» We are *not* doing the *saving*; but we are *repenting* of our sin, *trusting* God, and learning to *obey* him.

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More about the "time" issue.

God, the *Creator*, does not operate on the same level as *created* humans.

- God knew all these things when we (and all creation) *did not yet exist*.
- ✓ Since he is not a created being, *limited to time and space*, he does not comprehend things the same way we do.
- ✓ He sees *all* things *at once*. In contrast, created beings learn things *progressively* – in a moment-by-moment sequence.

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways My ways,"
declares the LORD.

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so **My ways are higher than your ways**
and **My thoughts than your thoughts.**"

Isaiah 55:8-9 (BSB)

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★ God's plans for us will not fail! ★

- Since God is *not* a part of creation, and is *not* limited by time, nothing happens that surprises him.
- ✓ Surprises and unexpected events occur only to those who exist in the context of *time* – as we are (and as Jesus was, *as a man*).
- ✓ This means God does not have to come up with new plans, every time something seems (to us) to go wrong!

But the **plans** of the LORD **stand firm forever**,
the **purposes** of his heart **through all generations.**

Psalms 33:11 (NIV)

- God makes no mistakes. He has no surprises. He needs no "Plan B."
- ✓ God's plans stand firm. The devil cannot thwart them.

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- What God said to Israel is just as applicable to us:

... I am God, and there is none like Me.

I declare the end from **the beginning**,
and from **ancient times** **what is still to come.**

I say, '**My purpose will stand**,
and **all My good pleasure I will accomplish.**'

I summon a bird of prey from the east,
a man for **My purpose** from a far-off land.

Truly **I have spoken**,
and truly **I will bring it to pass.**

I have planned it,
and **I will surely do** it.

Isaiah 46:9b-11 (BSB)

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★ How do we see it? ★

- We exist in time. We cannot see the whole picture – all that God has planned for us.
- ✓ To us, the devil may seem to be winning.
- ✓ To us, life may seem like a tug-of-war between "God's side" and "the devil's side." But to God, victory is as good as already accomplished.
- God has all this planned for us – for *all* of us who become followers of Jesus – even if we think we're not important enough for his attention.
- For us, circumstances often change. We may express lots of emotions – good or bad, happy or sad, confident or confused, etc. But ultimately we will be able to say:

Many, O LORD my God,
are **the wonders You have done**,
and **the plans You have for us**—
none can compare to You—
if I proclaim and declare them,
they are **more than I can count.**

Psalms 40:5 (BSB)

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Here is a summary of these things:

- **Before the world existed:** God chose *us in Christ*, to be holy and blameless in his presence!
 - **Before the beginning of time:** God promised *us eternal life*.
 - **Before time began:** God gave *us grace in Christ*, so that later (when we came into existence), we would be saved and be called to a holy life.
 - **Since the creation of the world:** God has prepared a kingdom for us.
 - We were predestined: **to be adopted into sonship.**
 - We were predestined: **according to his plan.**
 - We were predestined: **to be conformed to the image of God's son.**
- Our "living-out" of this is the result of God's "secret" wisdom, which is *now* revealed:
- **Before time began:** God destined this wisdom – a previously-hidden mystery – **to result in our glory** (referring to our glorification)! This wisdom refers to the Good News – not just its *facts*, but also the *changes* it causes in us.

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HOW do these things fit with our study of "End-Time Issues"?

- **How we started the study:**
 - ✓ Scripture tells us that Jesus may return at any time.
 - ✓ We examined a number of specific end-time issues that people tend to focus on. However...
 - ✓ We noted that Scripture does not tell us that we need to understand or develop a "time table" for his return. Instead...
 - ✓ Scripture tells us that we need to be **alert and ready for his return** – not wait until we think he *might* return. ***This has been our focus.***
- **What we have been doing:**
 - ✓ We have been examining **how God is directing world events** in a way that will result in the *fulfillment* of all that he has promised: the removal of sin and the restoration of the world to a perfect place – *a place that is even greater than it was at the beginning.*
 - ✓ We have also been studying **what type of conduct the citizens of the future world must have** – and must *begin* to have even now (the Ten Commandments). ***Our goal is to be ready.***

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- Today?

- ✓ Today, we have focused on how **God has plans for his people** – the followers of Jesus, who will inhabit the future world.
 - » (This also applies to Old Testament followers of God, who hadn't yet been told about Jesus, but who trusted and chose to follow God.)
- ✓ We have emphasized that **God's goal for us will not be thwarted**, and that he will use *all* things that occur to accomplish those purposes.
 - » Things may fail to make sense to us; God's plan may seem (to us) to be failing. But God, who knows and sees all that happens, is not surprised, and *never* has to change or redirect what he plans to do. **All things, without failure, move in the direction of accomplishing his purposes.**
 - » **How does this link to what's next?**

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- What's next?

- ✓ We are going to see **how God prepares for the future King**: Jesus, who will return and will rule over all creation.
- ✓ God has promised this in what we now call the "Davidic Covenant" (originally made with King David).
- ✓ Yet this promise ultimately goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden – where, after the first humans sinned, God promised that there would one day be a descendant (a "seed") who would destroy the Serpent, the devil.
- ✓ Down through the ages, there have been *many* times when it seemed – to people, limited in their perceptions by *time* – that God's promise about a deliverer would *fail*.
- ✓ Yet, just like the promises we've seen today, **God has a goal...** which he has known from before the creation of the earth and before time began – and **his plans will not fail!**

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OUR MISSION!

TRUST God!

HE will accomplish what he has planned – as faithfully in *our* lives, as in the entire world situation.

> The Devil cannot stop him. <

★ ***This fact applies to us, Jesus' followers.*** ★

What God has planned for us will come to pass, even though everything may seem go be going wrong in our lives.

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Credits

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