

The Gospel in Revelation

A Biblical Outline

In Romans 8 we find a brief outline of this plan of salvation:

“For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:29-32).

Those have to be some of the most beautiful verses in the Bible. In them you can see the progression of the plan of redemption. Let’s outline the four steps mentioned:

First—All are predestined to be restored to the image of our Father. God and Christ made a commitment before the foundation of the world that if mankind sinned, Christ would die—not for just a few, but for all. Every human being is of consequence to God.

Second—Because Jesus is the “Savior of *all* men,” God “calls *all* men everywhere to repent” (1 Timothy 4:10; Acts 17:30). God could not call all men everywhere to repent if all men were not predestined to be saved through Christ. That is why Christ could say, “And I, if I, be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me” (John 12:32). The “drawing” spoken of here parallels the “called” in Romans 8:30.

Third—While we are all predestined to be saved and all are called to be saved, not everyone will be saved. It is true that Christ paid the penalty for our sins; He purchased our forgiveness. He signed the emancipation papers for the entire race. The fact that we are alive today shows the effect of Christ’s forgiveness on all humanity (Romans 5:18). If God had extended no forgiveness to us, we would not now even exist (Genesis 2:17; 2 Corinthians 5:18). However, we will not all choose to accept what God has given us. He extended salvation to us in the gift of His Son. The amazing problem that all of heaven weeps to behold is that so many do not want the Son.

Fourth—Even those who choose to be lost will finally see that Christ’s death purchased not only forgiveness but also glorification, that is, the redemption of their bodies from the curse of sin (Romans 5:8-10; 8:23). Paul addresses this in his epistle to the Corinthians. He states: “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall *all* be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:20-22).

The only way the bodies of the lost can be raised to life from death’s firm hold is through the redemption of Jesus Christ. Yet because the lost have fully rejected the gift of salvation, both their justification and the redemption of their bodies are cut short. The justifying power of Christ allows them only a short probationary life. Their benefits from the plan of salvation are on a temporal basis only (Acts 17:24-28). Likewise, the same glorification that will redeem the body of the righteous in immortality will resurrect the lost from the first death only to meet the second death (Revelation 20:5-6, 14). How utterly tragic, when all of salvation’s gifts had been freely extended to them! (Romans 11:29.)

Summary

According to the Bible, God predestined all to be saved. This predestination is not according to our works but according to His grace (2 Timothy 1:8-10). It speaks of those for whom Christ died, and since Christ died for all of humanity, then all of humanity is predestined for salvation. It is for those whom it is God’s will to save, and since God is willing that none be lost, it is for everyone (see 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4).

Those who perish will do so because they refuse to be adopted as children of God through Christ Jesus. “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (Romans 11:29). The redemptive ransom of Christ was freely given even for those who will spurn the gift and choose not to repent (1 Timothy 2:6). But in spite of its rejection, God’s grace has already been given. “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Romans 5:20).

Remember that Christ’s sacrifice was for all transgression and all sin, because He came to seek and to save the lost! Satan knows that Christ purchased redemption for the whole world, and is determined to wrest from Christ’s hand every soul that he can possibly influence. Yet there is no reason, except our own refusal of the gift, why all men could not, should not, be saved.

The gift is ours. Each one of us is included. Dave, Todd, Cathy, Tammy, Kurt, Steve, Lori, you and me. Not one has been left out of God’s plan of redemption from sin. His love and grace call us today from the guilt and woe of transgression to the peace and joy of forgiveness. Won’t you respond to His goodness? Won’t you say, “Yes, I will have Jesus. I accept His forgiveness. I want to give my heart and life to Him and serve Him evermore”? Amen.

Preludes of Hope

Predestined in Christ

It is just a short line of the Bible that most of us probably pass right over when we study Revelation 13. Yet here, in the very epicenter of the final crisis, we find one of the most significant truths of salvation, hidden to the surface reader. Of course, this is exactly where we would expect God to place His salvation truth, in the center of the final crisis, hoping that many will find it, whether out of sincerity or curiosity.

“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship Him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).

Did you catch the thought? Not the one about all the earth worshiping this end-time power symbolized by a “beast.” And not the “book of life” reference either. The thought I’m referring to is found in the last phrase of the verse, the one about “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

Have you ever stopped to ponder just what that means? Have you considered all that is implied in those words?

Now, we know it does not mean that Jesus Christ was literally slain at the foundation of the world. The Bible is clear that the Son of man came into this world about 2,000 years ago. It was at that time He was slain as a lamb for our sins, as Peter states:

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation 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” (1 Peter 1:18-20).

Here we see that Christ was foreordained, or ordained ahead of

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time, to be our sacrifice for sin. This means that as soon as there was sin, there was a Savior. Jesus was set apart to be our substitute and surety from the very beginning of Earth's creation (Titus 1:2-3).

Christ was promised to us by God before the world began and manifested in due time, or at the set time. God foresaw man's fall and the invasion of sin on our planet. He did not want mankind to succumb to the power of evil, but He knew that we could. In love He made provision for that possibility. Jesus, God's only begotten Son, volunteered to step down from the throne of heaven and come to our rescue (Philippians 2:5-8). In this way Christ was predestined to be our Savior.

Who Has Been Predestined?

Predestine is a big word, but it simply means "to decide ahead of time."

The Bible is quite clear on this subject. First it teaches predestination as applied to our Savior—that Christ was predestined to come to our rescue, foreordained as the Lamb of God from the foundation of the world. This we have clearly seen from the previous texts. Secondly, God's Word teaches predestination as it applies to the objects of this great love. In other words, God has predestined us for eternal salvation. But who, you may wonder, is the *us*? That will be the consideration of this study.

I heard my first sermon on predestination in my car while scanning for an interesting Christian radio station in southern Illinois. It wasn't difficult to find a Christian station, since southern Illinois is part of what we call the Bible Belt. What drew my attention to this particular station, though, was the combination of beliefs I heard that day. Not only did these Christian teachers teach that no matter who we are or what we do, God has predestined certain ones to be saved and certain ones to be lost. I was very familiar with that interpretation. But along with that idea they combine the equally damaging misunderstanding that God will allow the lost to be eternally tormented in the fires of hell. This caused me to do some intense thinking. These two doctrines conclude that God has created certain people to burn in hell for eternity, and that there is nothing anyone can do, including Christ, to change that fate. Occasionally I get teary-eyed listening to a good sermon, but this time the tears were there for a different reason. It hardly seems possible to misrepresent the character of God much more than to combine these two teachings.

Considering that the salvation of souls, as well as the character of God, is at stake here, it would be well for us to closely examine what the Bible teaches on this subject. Ephesians 1 contains some of the strongest Biblical language on predestination. Let's look at verses 3-5:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will."

Here again we have the main point of Revelation 13:8. But this time the focus is not on Christ; it is on us. Notice that the phrase, "before the foundation of the world," is repeated. But this time the subject of the action is different. These verses do not emphasize that Christ was slain, but rather that we were chosen to be holy and without blame before Him. We were predestined to be adopted, out of Satan's family of sin and into the family of God, all because of the sacrifice of Christ. And this, according to the good pleasure of His will.

Praise God!

And let me ask you the million-dollar question: Who was chosen to be holy and without blame? Who was chosen before the foundation of the world to be redeemed from sin? Who was predestined to be adopted out of the family of Satan where we have fallen, and into the family of God? For whom did Jesus Christ die? Who should be eternally saved, according to the good pleasure of God's will? Who is the *us*?

Consider two verses with me that really nail down the answer to these important questions. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have *all* men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

You see, friends, Jesus Christ died for all mankind, not just for a pre-selected few. The Bible is so clear on this point that none need be confused, or remain in darkness concerning God's love for them.

The Most Precious Verse

Most of us are probably familiar with what is called the most precious verse in the Bible—John 3:16. May I share a few unique translations that I have come across during my Christian experience? The first one is the *Adventist* version. It reads like this:

"For God so loved Adventists that He gave His only begotten Son."

The next translation is the *Baptist* version. It reads similar to the previous one with a slight variation: "For God so loved Baptists that He gave His only begotten Son."

The last version I want to share with you is one I find among Christians in general. I'll call it the *General Christian* version. It goes like this: "For God so loved Christians that He gave His only begotten Son."

Of course, none of these are true Bible versions, but you get the point. While these paraphrased versions speak volumes about how much God loves those who profess to love Him, I think they fail to give full credit to the text as we find its true meaning. Let's read it from the King James Version, starting with verse 14:

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That *whosoever* believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the *world*, that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:14-16).

Now that's much better. It has that beautiful gospel ring to it. Any teaching of predestination that does not take in the full scope of the plan of salvation for all of humanity is an exact contradiction to the Bible. God loved the world, not just Christians. God gave His Son for sinners, not just saints. Yes, Christ's blood affords eternal life for those who believe, but it is for "whosoever" believes. God does not underwrite translations of John 3:16 that limit His saving grace to a chosen few. This most precious verse does not read: for God so loved Adventists, Baptists, or even Christians. It says that God so loved the world.

You might hear the argument, "Well, Christ, in His great wisdom, knew who would be saved and who would be lost, so that's why His blood only applies to those He decides to save."

Christ knew that Judas would betray Him, but still He washed his feet (John 13:5, 11-12). He knew that only one leper would return to thank Him, but still He cleansed ten (Luke 17:14). He knew that most of the Jews and Romans who were crucifying Him would never accept Him, but still He asked God to forgive them (Luke 23:34).

The Bible says Jesus Christ suffered and died for all mankind. "We see Jesus," says the author of Hebrews, "who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:9, NKJV).

Jesus was predestined to die for the sins of every man, woman and child that has ever lived or ever will live. The Lord laid on Him "the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). God gave His Son for all of us, for the world, for whosoever might believe. What a wonderfully powerful thought! And what an appropriate place to anchor this thought—right in the middle of Revelation 13, the chapter on the mark of the beast.