

Beginning with a Purpose

As we begin our walk through the Old Testament we need to make sure we have one very important detail in mind and that is who we are walking with as we turn the pages of God's word and who is being spoken of every step of the way. If we don't see this then the Old Testament can be relegated to a compilation of stories and history of an era gone by.

So, issue number one. Why was God's word delivered to the prophets of old?

To reveal God's redemptive plan for mankind and more specifically to reveal the One through whom this redemption would come; Jesus Christ.

Every book of the Old Testament, without exception, is about Jesus Christ's coming into this world to redeem a people for Himself.

How do we know this?

Luke 24:12-27 ¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened. ¹³ And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and *began* traveling with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. ¹⁷ And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ One *of them*, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" ¹⁹ And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, ²⁰ and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. ²¹ "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. ²² "But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. ²⁴ "Some of those who were with us went to the

tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see." ²⁵ And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" ²⁶ "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

Paul also understood the importance of seeing Jesus Christ on every page of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Acts 28:17-24 ¹⁷ After three days Paul called together those who were the leading men of the Jews, and when they came together, he *began* saying to them, "Brethren, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. ¹⁸ "And when they had examined me, they were willing to release me because there was no ground for putting me to death. ¹⁹ "But when the Jews objected, I was forced to appeal to Caesar, not that I had any accusation against my nation. ²⁰ "For this reason, therefore, I requested to see you and to speak with you, for I am wearing this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel." ²¹ They said to him, "We have neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren come here and reported or spoken anything bad about you. ²² "But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere." ²³ When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening. ²⁴ Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe.

Jesus, during His pre-resurrection days, was telling the Jews that the Scriptures are not just books regarding their nation and their forefathers, but was a book about Himself.

John 5:39-40 ³⁹ "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; ⁴⁰ and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.

There are many other places in the New Testament that bear witness to the fact that the prophets of old were speaking on behalf of God announcing the coming of the Messiah.

1 Peter 1:10-12 ¹⁰ As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful searches and inquiries, ¹¹ seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-- things into which angels long to look.

And so, as we begin our walk through the bible we need to be diligent to carefully search for and see this Christ who was predicted to come to save His people. And so, we begin in the beginning.

Genesis. And this is precisely what Genesis means; beginnings.

Genesis 1:1 ^{NAU} In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

What does the creation of the universe have to do with Jesus Christ?

We know that it is Jesus Himself who is referred to as creator in a number of places in Scripture.

Hebrews 1:1-2 ^{NAU} God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

John 1:1-3 ^{NAU} **John 1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

As we see in John 1:2 the phrase, He was in the beginning with God, is an important phrase.

If Jesus Christ was with God in the beginning where did this place Christ a nano-second before the beginning?

With God, which is to say He was eternally with God thus making Him God, because only God lives outside of time, which was created in the beginning.

But to get an understanding of the creation of the universe we have to go back before the beginning, that is, before the creation of the world. Because what happened before the creation of the world sets the stage for the reason for such a creation.

Ephesians 1:3-6 ³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

What does it mean that He chose us before the foundation of the world?

It means, among other things, that before time began there was a plan to create time and matter and more importantly a people to live in that physical realm with the express purpose of being united to God forever.

By the way, this is one of the reasons man cannot and will not live in some disembodied state in some ethereal existence. We were designed to be material beings from the beginning and we will be material, or corporal beings, forever in Christ.

And so, before time began there was a plan to redeem people from sin. If this is the case what does this tell us about God's decree for man from eternity?

God not only knew what man would do regarding his choice to not trust his creator and eat the forbidden fruit, He planned for man to fall. There was never any doubt in God's mind that man would make the right choice. In His sovereignty He decreed that this is the way in which God's future involvement with man would take place. In other words, God never intended for man to live in a perfect world in the Garden of Eden on this present earth.

Now, this obviously raises a number of issues that are not designed to be answered in this particular study, but suffice it to say that God's plan for man had nothing to do with God's knowledge of the future and man's choice in the future, and then God making a plan from that knowledge in eternity past to redeem sinful men in the future.

The future is not something that God simply knows about and then reacts to; He determines it. If He didn't then He would simply be a God who only reacts to the will of man instead of determining His own will.

Isaiah 43:10-14 ¹⁰ "You are My witnesses," declares the LORD, "And My servant whom I have chosen, So that you may know and believe Me And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me. ¹¹ "I, even I, am the LORD, And there is no savior besides Me. ¹² "It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed, And there was no strange *god* among you; So you are My witnesses," declares the LORD, "And I am God. ¹³ "Even from eternity I am He, And there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?" ¹⁴ Thus says the LORD your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, "For your sake I have sent to Babylon, And will bring them all down as fugitives, Even the Chaldeans, into the ships in which they rejoice.

Does this sound like a God who is dependant on a future choice that man makes and then comes up with a contingency plan to deal with it?

Job was a mere man who questioned God's goodness and understanding of Job's future. Listen to what God said.

Job 38:1 - 39:1 ^{NAU} Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, ² "Who is this that darkens counsel By words without knowledge? ³ "Now gird up your loins like a man, And I will ask you, and you instruct Me! ⁴ "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell *Me*, if you have understanding, ⁵ Who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it? ⁶ "On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, ⁷ When the morning stars sang together And all the sons of God shouted for joy? ⁸ "Or *who* enclosed the sea with doors When, bursting forth, it went out from the womb; ⁹ When I made a cloud its garment And thick darkness its swaddling band, ¹⁰ And I placed boundaries on it And set a bolt and doors, ¹¹ And I said, "Thus far you shall come, but no farther; And here shall your proud waves stop "? ¹² "Have you ever in your life commanded the morning, *And* caused the dawn to know its place, ¹³ That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, And the wicked be shaken out of it? ¹⁴ "It is changed like clay *under* the seal; And they stand forth like a garment. ¹⁵ "From the wicked their light is withheld, And the uplifted arm is broken. ¹⁶ "Have you entered into the springs of the sea Or walked in the recesses of the deep? ¹⁷ "Have the gates

of death been revealed to you, Or have you seen the gates of deep darkness? ¹⁸ "Have you understood the expanse of the earth? Tell *Me*, if you know all this. ¹⁹ "Where is the way to the dwelling of light? And darkness, where is its place, ²⁰ That you may take it to its territory And that you may discern the paths to its home? ²¹ "You know, for you were born then, And the number of your days is great! ²² "Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, Or have you seen the storehouses of the hail, ²³ Which I have reserved for the time of distress, For the day of war and battle? ²⁴ "Where is the way that the light is divided, *Or* the east wind scattered on the earth? ²⁵ "Who has cleft a channel for the flood, Or a way for the thunderbolt, ²⁶ To bring rain on a land without people, *On* a desert without a man in it, ²⁷ To satisfy the waste and desolate land And to make the seeds of grass to sprout? ²⁸ "Has the rain a father? Or who has begotten the drops of dew? ²⁹ "From whose womb has come the ice? And the frost of heaven, who has given it birth? ³⁰ "Water becomes hard like stone, And the surface of the deep is imprisoned. ³¹ "Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, Or loose the cords of Orion? ³² "Can you lead forth a constellation in its season, And guide the Bear with her satellites? ³³ "Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, Or fix their rule over the earth? ³⁴ "Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, So that an abundance of water will cover you? ³⁵ "Can you send forth lightnings that they may go And say to you, 'Here we are'? ³⁶ "Who has put wisdom in the innermost being Or given understanding to the mind? ³⁷ "Who can count the clouds by wisdom, Or tip the water jars of the heavens, ³⁸ When the dust hardens into a mass And the clods stick together? ³⁹ "Can you hunt the prey for the lion, Or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, ⁴⁰ When they crouch in *their* dens *And* lie in wait in *their* lair? ⁴¹ "Who prepares for the raven its nourishment When its young cry to God And wander about without food?

Job 40:1-2 ^{NAU} Then the LORD said to Job, ² "Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it."

What is God essentially saying to Job?

Who in the world are you to question anything that I do? I am the Potter, you are the clay and if I desire to make one pot for honorable use and another for common use who are you to question what I do?

This is exactly what Paul was saying to the Romans because the issue of God's eternal decree concerning man came up among

those in that church. Listen to Paul's language and see if you can find anywhere in this paragraph a God who looked down the halls of time in the future and made a determination on who to choose based on some decision man would make in the future.

Romans 9:10-24 ¹⁰ And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived *twins* by one man, our father Isaac; ¹¹ for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, ¹² it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER." ¹³ Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED." ¹⁴ What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION." ¹⁶ So then it *does* not *depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH." ¹⁸ So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. ¹⁹ You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" ²⁰ On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? ²¹ Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? ²² What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? ²³ And *He did so* to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴ *even* us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

I'm guessing that Paul had a person by the name of Job in the back of his mind when writing this.

But my point in bringing all of this up is not to discuss the theology of foreordination or predestination or man's free will or anything related to man's involvement in salvation. My point is to show us that the God that we are dealing with is an awesome God and creator who never had to consult with man as to what He desired from eternity.

And what He desired from eternity, and has been accomplishing in time, is what we have written for us in this book that we're going to be walking through in the coming weeks.

But one more piece of the puzzle needs to be looked at. And that is not just what God decreed from eternity past regarding man, but what God decreed from eternity as to how that would be accomplished in His Son.

1 Peter 1:17-21 ¹⁷ If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *on earth*; ¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ. ²⁰ For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you ²¹ who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

In these verses we see God's eternal decree that when it was time for God to redeem His creation man, it would be done by, through and in Christ. It's what we read in the beginning of John's gospel.

John 1:1-4 ^{NAU} In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

This Word, who was with God in the beginning and who is none other than the God who created all things, had already made the choice to become a sacrifice for sinful men, long before the world was ever created.

From eternity past it was determined in the triune Godhead that the role of the Father would be different from the role of the Son and Spirit. It was determined that the Son, before any man was created, would be sent to die, again, long before death would even be a part of man's existence.

What this tells us is that God not only determined that man would be created, but He chose the One who would have to take man's place when it came to paying the price for man's sin. It was always

God's intention to create a world where sin would be used to bring Him glory.

To suggest that God's knowledge of the future of man's will to sin after he was created by God, was the determining factor of how God would then plan for man's future by providing a Savior, is to miss how the Sovereignty of God works.

If this is the case then the question would have to be raised as to why God created man in the first place if He knew what man was going to do.

He designed into man, not just the ability to sin, but the certainty that he would sin. This does not make God the author of sin, nor does it make God a monster for building into His creation the certainty of the heinousness of sin and its results.

This is precisely what Paul was saying to the Romans.

Romans 9:17-20 ⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH." ¹⁸ So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. ¹⁹ You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" ²⁰ On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?

God created the universe for one reason and one reason only; that His name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth for eternity, and He planned it that way from eternity.

We cannot do a survey of the bible without having this foundation firmly in place. If we approach these words of God in any other manner the words will have no weight or purpose. The words will be construed as being about man and his needs, rather than focusing on the God who created man and God's will and purposes, and we'll miss the whole point as to why Christ is revealed at all.

Now we can begin the survey.