

# The need to understand God's eternal purpose

To have any clear understanding of salvation, to be clear on the Christian walk, to have any certainty of hope, we must first understand what God is doing in redemption. What is it all about?

In order to understand this we must know what God's plan was from the start. What is God's decree all about? What is God's eternal purpose? Having gained knowledge of the objective, we must then understand the processes in this plan. How does God set about fulfilling his purpose?

When all this is clear, we then have a framework to fit everything else into. Without such a theological framework all sorts of doctrines just hang in the air with no connections. Heresies breed easily in this environment; teachings which do not fit in with God's eternal decree cannot be sound. For instance: Dispensational and Jewish Root systems of doctrines are contradictory to God's eternal decree since they posit a separation in God's people, emphasise an earthly kingdom and, in some radical versions, teach more than one way of salvation.<sup>1</sup>

The decree of God is sovereign; thus any theological system based upon man contributing to salvation in some way is opposed to the decree; such as Arminianism or the Free-Offer.

## **The divine purpose**

First we have to ascertain what the purpose of God was from the very beginning; what is the ultimate divine goal in the decree?

It is to have a full manifestation of God's glory in a material world; to fill the universe with the glory of God expressed in human form on a perfect world.

This is demonstrated in gathering a holy people to be the family of God, a people united in Christ. In more emotive terms, it is to collect a bride for the Son of God. These people will be holy as God is holy; spiritual beings like God, and yet material in composition like Adam before the fall, but even better.

The gathering of a huge number of people, each manifesting a small aspect of God in purity, will together approximate the infinite glory of God in physical terms in what they think, speak and do on a restored, glorious earth.

So, the decree of God has the objective of achieving this goal; to gather a redeemed people to glorify God. The beginning of this decree relates to the counsel in the Trinity that occurred in eternity.

## **The 'everlasting covenant'**

This counsel of God is usually theologically formulated according to the concept of a covenant in eternity, though little is said of this in Scripture. Some people speak of an 'eternal covenant', though this phrase is never found in Scripture. There are many texts

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<sup>1</sup> There are now many versions of Dispensationalism [Classic, Hyper, Progressive etc.] and a great number of Judaising ministries under the general banner of the Jewish Root Movement.

mentioning an ‘everlasting covenant’, but closer inspection shows that this is referring to the perpetual nature of a historical covenant.

In the Noahic Covenant God makes a perpetual promise not to flood the earth and destroy it but to provide seedtime and harvest until the end. The everlasting nature of covenant promises relates to specific periods of time. At the end of time, at the Second Coming, the earth will be destroyed, but by fire and not flood.

The Davidic Covenant promised that there would be an everlasting heir to the throne of David, which is Christ. These are said to be everlasting covenants.

There is only one case where the words ‘everlasting covenant’ may refer to a covenant in eternity -

**Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Heb 13:20**

However, even this is more likely to refer to the New Covenant, especially bearing in mind the particular argument of Hebrews that the New Covenant of Christ cancels the Old Mosaic Covenant. The blood of Christ is directly and specifically related to the New Covenant.

So, we cannot talk with certainty about a covenant in heaven in eternity. Any talk of a single covenant governing all history and emerging from eternity has no Biblical basis.

Some (Covenant theologians) make a rigid contract out of such an eternal covenant but Scripture is muted on this, and the idea of a formal contract is unsuitable within the framework of the loving community in the Godhead. Also, certain aspects of traditional Covenant Theology seem to me to be unsound, such as suggesting that the covenant was a contract only between the Father and the Son. Frequently the Holy Spirit is missed out in expositions of Covenant Theology.<sup>2</sup>

In my studies of Scripture I see no mention of covenant until the fall of man has occurred and the idea of a covenant is introduced by God to enable a formal friendship with men on the basis of the terms of a covenant. So the idea of a formal covenant in eternity seems unsuitable to me. Far better is the more Scriptural term ‘counsel’; this could be described as a direction or deliberation after a consultation. The Godhead made a deliberation, in consultation amongst the three Persons, regarding the objective of delivering a physical manifestation of God’s glory.

There are only hints about the agreement within the Trinity, but what is certain is that the Son agreed to be the active partner in achieving the salvation that the Father planned and the Spirit agreed to be the active partner in applying that redemption to the chosen people.

<sup>2</sup> Technical note: the point in Covenant Theology is to provide a mechanism whereby the unity of Scripture may be upheld. It tries to solve the problem as to why the OT and NT appear so different. It proposes that there is one eternal covenant, with many subsets, and each of these is but a change of administration, a superficial change, within the single covenant of grace. Apart from no Biblical teaching explaining this at all, it contradicts many Scriptures. It denies the newness of the New Covenant, emphasised in the NT. It denies that the Old Covenant (Mosaic) is cancelled and had no power (Heb 8:13). It leads people into a legalistic attempt to live the Christian life under Old Covenant terms instead of following the Spirit of Christ. Finally, it leads to paedobaptism, which has no Scriptural sanction whatsoever. Texts alluded to for support are circumstantial and it denies the Biblical command to baptise ‘disciples’. It also relies upon a false theory that water baptism is the corollary of circumcision; something never stated and which denies Col 2:11. It is odd that Presbyterians, who insist that they are utterly Biblical, rest upon a theory that is devoid of Biblical support. Covenant Theology was only fully developed about 100 years after Calvin.

The Father gave a people to the Son; the Son agreed to die for these alone and the Spirit agreed to apply atonement to the elect.

So the means of obtaining a salvation for a people is already worked out in eternity. This salvation was necessary in order for the gathering and perfecting of the elect to be the work of God, and thus holy and perfect. No plan that involved the work, or partial work, of man could be either perfect or holy. Even un-fallen man was a creature and thus not able to share in divine perfection. But in God's plan, man would be allowed to sin and thus his contribution was not just short of perfection but would be stained with sin, anti-holiness, imperfection. Salvation had to be all of God.

### **The single decree**

I blessed the Most High and praised and honoured Him who lives forever: For His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom *is* from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and *among* the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, 'What have you done?' Dan 4:34-35

In the mind of God the decree is single and all-comprehensive. It is the will of God expressed in the creation and redemption of his people and is often spoken of as God's counsel or purpose.<sup>3</sup> However from the human perspective, and from the progressive revelation in the Bible, we can observe different aspects of the decree and these are used to assist the exposition of the subject.

The decree involves God's sovereign purpose expressed in the control of creation and history to produce and safeguard the elect. It is God's sovereign predestination of everything in the universe and history. Contrary to modern deviations, even among supposed Calvinists, the historic Reformed position is expressed in the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (written for children):

Q. 7 What are the decrees of God? A. The decrees of God are, his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.(Eph 1:4,11; Rm 9:22,23) Q.8 How doth God execute his decrees? A. God executeth his decrees in the works of creation and providence.<sup>4</sup>

Thus the decree covers and controls all events in history including the 'free' acts of men and their wicked actions as well as 'accidental' events. It is the control of all things in heaven and earth.

### **The decree of election**

God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thess 2:13-14

He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself,

<sup>3</sup> Acts 2:23, 'Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God'. Eph 1:11, 'In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.' Heb 6:17, 'Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath.' Counsel = *boule*. Friberg defines '*boule*' as: (1) as an inward thought process leading toward a decision deliberation, motive (1 Cor 4:5). (2) The result of inner deliberation resolve, decision, purpose, plan (Acts 5:38). (3) The result of community deliberation counsel (Acts 27:12). The divine will counsel, purpose (Acts 2:23).

<sup>4</sup> *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Q7-8.

according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. Eph 1:4-6

The next step was the choosing of a portion of the whole human race to receive this planned salvation.

This choosing had nothing to do with foreseen merit, such as believing. We have already explained that man could not contribute to his salvation in any way. The choosing, we are told, is solely due to the good pleasure of God:

**Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure<sup>5</sup> of His will. Eph 1:5**

**In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will. Eph 1:11**

Sometimes this choice was surprising, such as the cases of Saul (Paul), Rahab, Jacob, or Jonah; but it was God's good intent to choose them, despite their failure to have many attractive qualities. This is benevolent grace.

The choosing of the elect necessitates (by reason and logic alone, to say nothing of revelation) also separating out the reprobate (called 'double predestination').<sup>6</sup> This is not just a passing by of the elect (preterition), which is just a fudge, it is an active choice. God determined to choose Pharaoh for destruction and Moses for salvation. No matter how uncomfortable this is to human sensibilities, Scripture tells us that it is so.

**What if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory. Rm 9:22-23.**

**The LORD has made all for Himself, yes, even the wicked for the day of doom. Prov 16:4**

**For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. Jude 4**

**They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. 1 Pt 2:8**

**For the wicked are reserved for the day of doom; they shall be brought out on the day of wrath. Job 21:30**

So the reprobate do not arise by accident; it is not just that, faced with a mass of fallen humans, God chose to save some out of it (infralapsarianism) but, from eternity, he chose the elect for his glory and the reprobate to demonstrate his justice and wrath against sin.

This is the supralapsarian scheme of classic Reformed theology, which is today so hated, even by supposed Calvinists.<sup>7</sup> Despite the claims of many, it is also the scheme of Calvin

<sup>5</sup> *Eudokia* - will, choice, benevolence, delight, pleasure.

<sup>6</sup> If God singles out the elect from the mass of humanity he has, by sheer logic, decided not to choose the rest. Thus they are actively reprobated.

<sup>7</sup> Technical note: there are two schools in Calvinism regarding predestination in the logical presentation of God's decree. The more common one is infralapsarianism or sublapsarianism ('under the fall'). This places the decree to permit the fall after the decree to create and before the decree to elect [create man-permit fall-election]. Supralapsarianism places the decree to elect some before the decree to create man and permit him to fall (supra: 'above' the fall) [Decree of election – decree to create man – permit fall]. This emphasises the eternal purpose in God to manifest his own glory in the salvation of some and the destruction of others. This was the position of Martin Luther, John Calvin, Theodore Beza, Jerome Zanchius, Gottschalk, William

himself, as we can see from this quote alone, ‘*Solomon also teaches us that not only was the destruction of the ungodly foreknown, but the ungodly themselves have been created for the specific purpose of perishing (Prov. 16:4)*’.<sup>8</sup> See also his detailed outworking of this in his treatises on predestination (published in ‘*Calvin’s Calvinism*’, RFPA).<sup>9</sup>

Unless the doctrine of election is properly understood it is impossible to progress in theology since most doctrines hang on this initial act of God. For instance, atonement cannot properly be known unless the scope of it is understood and this is limited by election (only the elect are atoned for). Neither can the power and efficacy of atonement be understood unless one grasps election, thus the atonement actually saves its intended participants (the elect) rather than actually saving no one but merely leaving a universal potential for salvation (Arminianism or Amyraldism).

### **The decree of creation and the permit to fall**

Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, and you waters above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the LORD, for He commanded and they were created. He also established them forever and ever; He made a decree which shall not pass away. Ps 148:4-6

Everyone who is called by my name, whom I have created for my glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him. ... This people I have formed for myself; they shall declare my praise. Isa 43:7,

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The next step is the decree to create a race of human beings and allow them to fall into sin. This is divine creation out of nothing, which means that any form of evolutionary theory (whether secular or theistic) is ruled out. The decree to create was centred upon the creation of man according to the divine strategy from eternity. The decree is not about the creation of an environment in which man could develop by natural processes. Man is the centre of creation because he is central to God’s plan.

The fall of Adam was no accident. It was foreseen and decreed by God and was engineered (foreordained) in order to work out the divine purpose. God has declared that his testimony will be formed in two ways. The first is the manifestation of the elect in Christ who are perfect and express the divine nature in holiness. The second is the demonstration of God’s anger at sin and his holy justice against wickedness. Without darkness, light is not seen to be light. To facilitate this man must be allowed to fall into sin.

An important point must be made here; that is that God is not the author of sin. It is not possible that a holy and perfect God could originate sin; furthermore Scripture tells us this plainly (Jm 1:13). How could God justly condemn sin in men if he caused that sin himself? However, God does control the sin that men commit freely. Men sin because they want to and they enjoy it but God controls these evil works to a foreordained good end.

I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things. Isa 45:7

Who is he who speaks and it comes to pass, When the Lord has not commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High That woe and well-being proceed? Lam 3: 37-38

Twisse, Francis Turretin, William Perkins, William Ames, John Knox, Thomas Goodwin, Abraham Kuyper, Herman Hoeksema, Arthur Pink, Gordon Clark and many others. It is today the minority position.

<sup>8</sup> *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries: Romans and Thessalonians*, pp.207-208.

<sup>9</sup> Some people emphasise some loose comments of Calvin in his sermons, spoken on the hoof, suggesting that he was infralapsarian. But for a clear presentation of Calvin’s thoughts on predestination we must look at his treatises on the matter to show his mature thoughts.

If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done *it?* Amos 3:6

### Atonement & justification

Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Heb 12:2

Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people. Titus 2:13-14

Iniquities prevail against me; *as for our transgressions*, you will provide atonement for them. Blessed *is the man* you choose, and cause to approach *you*, *that he may dwell in your courts.* Ps 65:3-4

The next step is the decree to justify his chosen people through atonement. Atonement simply means to make a satisfaction for sin so that it is remitted. There are various aspects of this atonement made by Christ: penal substitution, Christ died in the place of others taking their punishment; ransom, a payment to God's law which had been transgressed; propitiation, turning away God's anger at sin; expiation, turning away sin itself; and reconciliation, bringing man back into fellowship with God. All these were considered in eternity to ensure that the sins of God's people would be completely put away.

The impact of atonement on the individual elect person is justification. This is the declaration made by God in heaven that the sinner has been completely forgiven, pardoned for sins, legally made righteous and acceptable in heaven and brought by legal adoption into God's family. Thus a full provision was made for every elect member.

Now all these things were solely applicable to the elect. The atonement was only considered in eternity after the decision by God to elect a certain number. This means that any theological system predicated upon an unlimited atonement is false. Such systems include: Universalism, Semi-Pelagianism, Arminianism, Moral Government Theory, Amyraldism, Four-Point Calvinism and the universal atonement seen in modern American New Calvinism.

The atonement is directed to the people that God gave the Son in eternity:

I have manifested your name to the men whom you have given me out of the world. They were yours, you gave them to me. Jn 17:6

Those whom you gave me I have kept; and none of them is lost. Jn 17:12

Father, I desire that they also whom you gave me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which you have given me; for you loved me before the foundation of the world. Jn 17:24

Of those whom you gave me I have lost none. Jn 18:9

It is nonsensical, and also contrary to revelation, that God gave the atonement to reprobates who were destined to damnation. Atonement is particular – applied only to the elect; it is limited, in that it is only available for the elect. Atonement is specifically targeted and is not universal.

This also means that the power of the atonement was completely efficacious for those it was directed to. It was decreed for some and, in history, was effective just for those chosen. The atonement was for a specific task and was fully successful in that task. The idea that the most precious thing in the universe, the blood of Christ, could be wasted and emptied for those who would never obtain it is preposterous. This again denies the theological systems mentioned earlier.

## **The decree to apply the atonement by the Spirit**

**Sanctification by the Spirit. 2 Thess 2:13**

**Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. 1 Pt 1:2**

All that we have considered thus far would produce nothing unless it was actually applied to the elect in time. Thus it was agreed that the Holy Spirit would be the agent that brought the benefits of salvation to the chosen people in due course. This involves a number of processes.

### *Angelic protection before conversion*

**Are they [angels] not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? Heb 1:14**

There is much confusion about the ministry of angels. However, in brief, their ministry regarding the saints under the New Covenant is the protection of those who will inherit salvation. That is, the safeguarding of the elect in the period before conversion when they are alienated from God and in danger. Without divine protection, supervised by the Holy Spirit, the elect could be killed by the enemy before they were saved.

After conversion the believer has the Holy Spirit indwelling him. With God in his heart he no longer requires the help of angels. Their chief ministry from this point is to observe and glorify God seeing the purposes of God worked out in the church (Eph 3:10).

### *The effectual calling through preaching*

**God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. 2 Tim 1:9**

**How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? Rm 10:14**

No man can believe the Gospel unaided, he requires grace. But there is only one form of grace and this comes from the cross and is effective to the elect alone.<sup>10</sup> This grace is irresistible in that it calls the elect and empowers them to believe and repent.

There are two types of calling. The first is the general, outward call of the Gospel in public preaching. This goes out to all as a proclamation of Christ. Everyone can hear this call but cannot respond to it. In fact, the reprobate who hear this call are hardened in their resistance to God and made more guilty. The second calling is the effectual call whereby the Spirit gives irresistible grace to the elect who hear the Gospel preached. This call gives the power to believe and repent in a regeneration of the heart. With the heart changed, the elect person has a renewed will to accept the Gospel command and obey it. All of this is done by the activity of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>10</sup> This denies the Methodist and Roman idea of preventient grace, a grace for all men, which aids those who bother to use it to see the Gospel and believe. It also denies the modern idea of Common Grace, which enables sinners to do good works and obtain God's favour but which does not save. Grace is only from the cross, is only effective for the elect and always saves.

*The provision of the word of God to enable preaching the Gospel*

**The Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.** 2 Tim 3:15-16

Preaching would not be possible without the word of God. Unless people can be instructed in God's commands and truth they cannot learn how to preach anything. Thus it was necessary that the Holy Spirit should supervise the writing down of Scripture through inspiring men to write the very thoughts of God. This inspiration was an out-breathing from the Spirit into the hearts of men so that they knew the actual ideas of God and put them into words.

The provision of Scripture is an activity of the Spirit and is the foundation of all that he does in the church. It is a serious error to separate the power of the Spirit from the word that he inspired. Every church fad that features the supposed powerful ministry of the Spirit but has no basis or reliance upon God's word (or is contradictory to God's word) is false and should be condemned.

*The application of grace to believers so that they are sanctified.*

**I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.** Acts 20:32

***It is good that the heart be established by grace.*** Heb 13:9

Believers must not only be converted but they must grow in grace and progress in sanctification until they are changed in a moment at the Return of Christ and fully sanctified. The power in this ministry is of the Holy Spirit.

People are changed as they are filled with the Spirit and learn to walk in the Spirit so that they bear the fruit of the Spirit. In doing this they are actually putting on Christ and abiding in him. The more a person is full of the Spirit and follows his leading, the more a person becomes like Christ, who sends the Spirit to guide us into all truth.

In all this the Spirit centres the attention of believers upon Christ and not himself; he glorifies Christ and brings the things of Christ to his people. Believers become more sanctified as they become more like Christ through putting on the new nature and putting off the old one.

But this also involves human activity, inspired by the Spirit, in fleeing temptation (2 Tim 2:22; 1 Cor 6:18, 10:14), waging war against spiritual wickedness (Eph 6:11-13), fighting the good fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12), striving against sin (Heb 12:4) etc.

*The preservation of believers until the return of Christ.*

**Whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.** Acts 3:21

**When He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.** 2 Thess 1:10

**To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ.** Jude 1:1

God's whole purpose would be ruined if, after all this trouble, believers fell away after conversion. As salvation is obtained by God and continued by his Spirit, so the preservation of believers to the end is also ruled by God's providence. It is not left to the

elect to continue in salvation by their own strength, just as they did not get saved by their own works.

The Lord Jesus ensures that no one snatched his people out of his hand:

I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given *them* to me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of my Father's hand. Jn 10:28-29

### **The decree to glorify the elect, judge the wicked and to restore the earth**

When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. 2 Thess 1:7-9

But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. ... But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. ... the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 2 Pt 3:7-13

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 1 Jn 3:2

The culmination of salvation is the removal of the old nature and the provision of a new material body that complements the new nature. Thus the believer can be perfect in holiness and fully reflect the glory of God.

This occurs when the Lord Jesus returns and collects his people. In an instant they are all changed to be like him.

After the appearance of the Lord there is the giving of account of all people on the Day of Judgment. The saints appear before the tribunal seat of Christ and give an account of how faithful they were in service to God. Rewards are given to those who prospered in service and these rewards involve ministries in the new world; positions of authority under Christ.

The wicked appear before God in a different place and are called to give an account of their sinful acts and agree with the punishment meted out. Everyone in history will be resurrected to face this judgement and to be alive in the everlasting condemnation of hell. They are condemned to be eternally separated from all the goodness, light and bliss of God.

At this point the earth, which was burned up with fire at the appearance of the glorified Christ in the clouds, will be restored to a perfect state, as in the Garden of Eden. The elect company lives on this renewed earth, where heaven and earth meet for the first time in fulness.

Thus the saints and the Lord fellowship together in harmony and holiness. God is manifested in his elect people in all that they do. We can only speculate as to what happens next, but this is the beginning of the fulness of the purpose of God; it is not the end. It is the consummation of human salvation, but it is the beginning of what God wants to do with this immortal company in Christ. The whole universe must be involved in this ministry in some manner or it would not have been created. The earth is the starting point for our activity in glorifying God.

## Conclusion

I trust you now have some small grasp of what the eternal plan and purpose of God is; that you understand the outworking of his decree and see how harmoniously the various Biblical doctrines fit into this plan.

Having a clear view of the decree of God enables us more easily to spot heresies that do not comply with the Biblical revelation.

However, the chief response to understanding this revelation is to worship God who decreed our great salvation in Christ.

This is historically sound theology:

God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established. Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet hath He not decreed anything because He foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.<sup>11</sup>

This is Biblical, God-centred theology. It is truth.

See also my paper, *The Vital Importance of Understanding God's Plan & Purpose*, and the diagram, *The Outworking of God's Plan and Purpose*.

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<sup>11</sup> *Westminster Confession*, 3:1-3.