

The Journey Begins

Before Creation

From Scripture we know that certain events happened before creation which had a bearing on the rest of history that followed creation.

Some of these events are: the foreordination of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross; the choosing of the elect; the recording of the names of the elect in the book of life; and so on. We also assume that angels were created before the creation of the world, although we have no account of that event.

Scripture could have been very short if creation was the ultimate purpose of God. Solely from the events in history since creation, we know that there was more to come and that creation was only the beginning of something far more excellent.

But it would come at a price.

The presence of the Holy Spirit

Before we continue and deal with the actual fall of man, let's look at the effect of the presence of the Holy Spirit to better understand what happened in the Garden that day.

A general rule here may be in order:

If the Holy Spirit is effectually 100% present, no evil is possible while if the Holy Spirit is effectually completely absent, nothing but evil is possible. Within these extremes, the Holy Spirit, at his pleasure, executes the duties of his office.

From Scripture we see that the Holy Spirit can be present in two different ways, namely, by virtue of His omnipresence as God and effectually by virtue of his office.

The Holy Spirit is always present everywhere as omnipresent God. The Holy Spirit also has an effectual or working presence through which He executes the duties of his office, namely, protecting, teaching, revealing the will of God, comforting, convicting, guiding, and so on. It stands to reason, then, that the Holy Spirit may be present as omniscient God, but distant as effectual executor of his office at one and the same instant.

For example, Christ was fully filled with the Holy Spirit and thus incapable of evil, while man, after the fall, was devoid of the effectual presence of the Holy Spirit and thus incapable of doing any good: this while the Holy Spirit, as the omniscient God, was always present.

The Holy Spirit might be more effective in the lives of men at one time than at other times. This concurs with our general rule stated above. Hence the psalmist says in

Psalms 51:11 "Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me."

Why would the effectual presence of the Holy Spirit ebb and flow in our lives: when it is closer to us, we will be godlier, and when it departs from us, we can only do evil?

The Financial Manager

His decision vs freedom of choice

Various Tests and Afflictions

So, we see that there are basically several kinds of tests or affliction that can befall us. We will look at two kinds for now. There is the kind that is the result of actual sin and the affliction that is suffered as a consequence, such as incarceration, shame, loss of benefits and comfort, and so on. There is also the kind of affliction that is the result of latent evil, that has not had the opportunity to be exposed, but needs to be repented of.

The story about our brother, the financial manager, has been designed to also illustrate this kind of affliction. The latter type of affliction is in various ways similar to the former kind, in that the Holy Spirit directs the choices we make in a way that is effective for each occasion, solely to achieve the goal of purifying and perfecting our faith.

We can trust the Holy Spirit that no worse affliction would befall us than what is necessary to sanctify us and keep us from sinning continually. Because the Holy Spirit thoroughly knows the innermost recesses of our hearts, only He can be the judge of the severity of affliction that is necessary to bring our evil desires to the fore and have us confess and repent of them.

The Holy Spirit and Afflictions

Should the Holy Spirit shower us with gifts without regard to our sanctification, and effectually remain with us, some latent evil may remain hidden in our hearts, and never be challenged, confronted, and repented, effectively making the Holy Spirit the sponsor of those evils. That is why the Holy Spirit sometimes effectively moves away from us, shielding us from his office as protector. Our unrepented evil desires then entice us and drag us away to sin and death. However, before the elect suffer death, they repent of their sins, and because of the promise that those who repent and call upon the name of the Lord will be forgiven and be healed, they are forgiven and healed.

The Holy Spirit then moves closer with the effectual working of his office as Comforter, Healer, Revealer of the will of God, Priest, Protector and others, and leads us back to the Light. With the new experience and close brush with death, we would be ever so careful not to fall into the same sin again – and in this way we grow out of our state of sin into a state of sanctification, being led by the Holy Spirit step by step.

Our afflictions should, therefore, be accompanied with prayer for forgiveness of sins as well as hallelujahs to the glory of God.

Jesus prayed for us in JOH 17:15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

Jesus also taught us to pray in Mat 6:13: and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.

Afflictions and Punishments

Although we see afflictions as chastisements and tests, they do look and feel exactly like punishments. Why should we not see them as punishments but loving discipline from our heavenly Father? Because Christ already paid the price for all our sins and made perfect satisfaction for those sins we have committed in the past as well as those that we will still commit in the future, until the end of this world.

Therefore, for the Father to punish us would be to seek satisfaction beyond that which Christ has rendered, which is impossible. Christ either succeeded in his mission or he failed and some satisfaction would be needed from us, which is absurd. Every affliction that we suffer can, then, only be because the Father disciplines us because he loves us as our heavenly Father. Where Scripture refers to the punishment of the saints, it is to be understood in the sense of loving discipline. If our earthly fathers punish us because they love us, how much more our heavenly Father?

It becomes clear, now that we understand the purpose of God in afflicting us, that God directs our affliction without becoming the author of evil. However, God is the author and creator of punishment, which includes the punishment that we suffer as discipline, as well as the punishment that is measured out for those who will be lost. God created punishment for two main reasons, namely, to sanctify his church, and to punish sin and so exercise his just judgment.

Adam and Eve, without any latent evil or blemish, were fully capable of resisting the devil's temptations but they employed their faculties rather to please their pride and chose an alliance with Satan and break from God. Had the effectual presence of the Holy Spirit remained with them, they would never have had the opportunity to sin, being fully protected by the work of the Holy Spirit but harboring their latent ability to give in to temptation.

The Journey Beyond the Fall

After the fall

According to the Divine plan, man had to proceed beyond the Garden, embarking on a journey, which ends after the Second Coming of Christ, resulting in the ultimate state that God ordained for the elect to be in. God ordained and planned the entire history of his people from before the creation of the world: creation, fall, Christ's sacrifice, resurrection, gospel, ascension, and glory.

At the time of the fall Adam and Eve's free will was only in its infancy and consequently failed to withstand the devil's temptation. It still required exercise so

that they could be able to freely choose to glorify God without the Holy Spirit's protection against the evil one. That is, they must be unable to sin, regardless of the temptation.

To remain free

Are we to assume that we, as believers, should blindly bump into the obstacles of temptation and sin, and so be afflicted by God until we learn to freely choose right?

No, not at all. Our attribute of free will determines how we act; it is not our actions that determine our free will - it is our freedom in Christ that determines our actions. We are free in Christ - we ought to act accordingly.

ROM 6:11 ... count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.
12Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. 13Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. 14For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

Because we are in the 'able to sin, able to not sin' era and thus free to glorify God by not sinning, we should choose rationally what is right. God's elect are not mindless robots but rational believers who freely hope on the things to come.

To put this in perspective, I propose an analogy: A wheel with 18 spokes:

1. To rationally choose what is right, we must know God's will.
2. To know God's will, we need to know His Word.
3. To know His Word, we need to study the Bible.
4. To know what we study, we need wisdom.
5. To obtain wisdom, we must pray for it.
6. For our prayers to be answered, we need faith.
7. To obtain faith, we need to hear the gospel.
8. To hear the gospel, we need to regularly go where it is preached: the church.
9. To go regularly to church, we need perseverance.
10. To persevere, we need to strengthen our faith.
11. To strengthen our faith we need to be regularly assured of God's faithfulness.
12. To obtain regular assurance and strengthening of our faith, we need to partake of the sacraments as often as we can.
13. To properly partake of the sacraments, we need to know our sin.
14. To know our sin, we need to carry God's law in our hearts.

15. To carry God's law in our hearts, we need to sacrifice our evil desires.

16. To sacrifice our evil desires is to deny our old nature and flee from sin.

17. To flee from sin we need to resist the devil.

18. To resist the devil, we need to choose rationally what is right.

It is a full circle.

God planned it all

In glory, the elect will be able to freely glorify God without the effectual presence of the Holy Spirit in His offices as Comforter, Protector, Revealer of God's will, and all his other temporary offices. Not that the Holy Spirit's presence would not be needed any longer, but His work of guiding, counseling, teaching, comforting, revealing God's will, and convicting us of our sins, would be complete. There would be no need for those offices after this life.

We see, then, that God planned it all along and since He is omniscient, he also ordained the fall of our First Parents.

Now, that brings a host of questions to the fore, such as, if God ordained their fall, how can we attribute the fall to Adam and Eve as sin? Surely, if man's will could not resist God's will, then God must be responsible for their fall and is thus the author of the evil that befell them.

Furthermore, if God had known that Eve would choose to side with Satan, why did He not prevent it, or even worse, why did he remove his Holy Spirit's effectual presence from her at such a critical moment? There may be more questions that could trouble the believer about the account of the fall, but let's focus on these for now.

The will of God and His foreknowledge

Remember, the same God who ordained all events also ordained human liberty, which makes it as certain as anything else that God ordained. Adam and Eve, notwithstanding their intimate relationship with God in the garden, chose to rebel against God.

The man building his house

The will of the owner and the workers

We see in this analogy two elements pertaining to the will of the owner, and the will of the workers. The will of the owner can be considered the primary will, since he is the one who is the first to visualize the project and the first to cause the project to happen, having freely decided to build this house, even before any worker became aware of the project. He foresaw the final product; foreordained the construction of the project, planned it to the very last detail, and saw to it that it is executed exactly as he planned. He is also the one who will delight in the

finished product, especially knowing that the final product ended up being exactly what he foreknew.

The other element is the will of the workers. As we have shown, they too are absolutely free, having contracted with the owner to perform certain tasks according to certain standards, for a specified remuneration. The owner, without infringement on their freedom or responsibility, directed their actions, as he wanted them to construct the building.

In a similar way, but to an infinitely greater degree, God directs our actions. His will for the course of events is the primary cause and man's will is the secondary cause. The two work together in perfect harmony - a harmony constructed, directed and maintained by the Holy Spirit.

When our will resists

Can we truly say that they work together in perfect harmony? What about instances where our will resists the Holy Spirit?

Even that is in perfect harmony with God's will. Let's take the example of the financial manager. Let's say he chose to embezzle the money to get him out of his dilemma. Yes, he would have resisted the Holy Spirit in his decision. Although he had the capacity to choose to not do so, he nevertheless went ahead and took the wrong course of action out of his own free will, giving greater credence to his own desires than to the will of God, with which he was familiar.

But God planned his wrong decision so that his affliction would be all that much greater to confront him with latent evil or weakness of will – so that his faith would be more severely exercised. All because the Holy Spirit knew exactly the extent of the latent evil in his heart and to what measure his faith had to be exercised to further his sanctification and the perfection of his faith.

If our brother chooses to remain faithful, the words of Psalm 119:101 would be applicable: "I have kept my feet from every evil path so that I might obey your word."

If he chooses to sin, the words of Psalm 119:71 would be applicable: "It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees."

But is God then not the author of evil? No, God's Holy Spirit merely sufficiently withholds His protection without which man does only evil all the time.

PSA 12:5 "Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, I will now arise," says the LORD. "I will protect them from those who malign them."

PSA 40:11 Do not withhold your mercy from me, O LORD; may your love and your truth always protect me.

JOH 17:11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name--the name you gave me--so that they may be one as we are one.

The Holy Spirit knows the extent and the time at which affliction should be put on the path of the believer. Some require only a light reprimand to solidify their faith, while others require more severe direction: all to progress the elect on their road to sanctification and to have their faith sufficiently perfected in time for their departure from this world and their appointment with Christ. All of us have to learn to trust God even in the sight of overwhelming personal calamity because the great tribulation will require of us to withstand and endure the severest of suffering.

The martyrs and free will

Enduring tribulation should be out of the free will of the believer, not being forced by anyone to give up his very life or suffer the greatest of torment for the sake of Christ, but because each freely choose to do so.

We don't have to wait for the end of time to have proof of this. The accounts of the martyrs are proof that those Christians had ample opportunity to make seemingly simple choices that would have saved them from their ghastly death, but they freely chose to die by torture, considering it an honor, rather than deny Christ in the smallest of detail. That is exercising the free will to glorify God, which is the chief end of man.

General application of the law

If the main purpose of it all is for God to collect for him a people to freely glorify Him, what, then, is the purpose of the general application of the law and of punishment of nations, even though there are believers and members of the elect among them?

There is one additional purpose that God revealed to us, which is subject to His main purpose, namely, to reveal himself to his Church, and the world, by showing forth his mercy, justice, and his wrath.

1. How else will we know God and that He is fair and loving, unless we see his justice?
2. How else will we know that He is also merciful if we don't see his mercy applied?
3. How else will we know his hatred for sin, if we don't see his wrath?
4. How else will we be grateful for having our eternal life returned to us, which we lost on account of our First Parents, if we do not know how much it cost to accomplish it?

Civil government

God also directs the power of government, so that civil and criminal laws are instruments in the hands of God to direct the climate in which the church operates: oppression in times of affliction and peace in times of blessing. If the criminal law loses its power of punishment, and the reprobate loses their fear of breaking the law, a general lawlessness creeps into society and the church, ultimately, also suffers. The believers don't despair, they repent of their sins, since no one is blameless, and pray to God for relief, who will hear their prayers and answer them at the appropriate time: even overthrowing ungodly governments for their sake.

Was God unfair to Adam and Eve?

Was God unfair by expecting Adam and Eve to resist evil while the knowledge of good and evil was only made known to them afterwards? No, He was not. To know evil does not give one the ability to discern right from wrong. Knowledge of God, which they had, is all that is necessary to protect one from evil. We ought not to be stiff-necked but submit to the LORD and meet the Lord in the sanctuary, which He has consecrated forever. If we serve the LORD his fierce anger will turn away from us. It is not the knowledge of evil that is necessary to discern between right and wrong, it is submitting to the Lord that turns his anger away.

James 3:13 - 17 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

James 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

We see, then, that knowledge of God, which Adam and Eve had in abundance, is all that is necessary to discern right from wrong.

So, we can safely say that God was not unfair to have them tempted before they acquired the knowledge of evil. As we have said before, they were perfectly equipped to deal with the temptations from Satan, but they chose not to.

God knew they would fall

God knew this would happen even before He created them. It was ordained that man should fall, so that God could pour out his mercy on them, so that they could trust him and glorify him freely, without requiring protection from the Holy Spirit. In the life hereafter man would be in a state of not being able to sin, so it is a prerequisite for him to be completely sanctified and perfect in every way, otherwise such a state would veneer imperfection and make man irrational. Why

irrational? Because, if it were possible to harbor latent imperfection while in glory, man would be able to also desire evil while in a state of 'unable to sin' and since the latter is a decree of God, it would overrule the latent imperfection, rendering man's will not free to desire to praise God forever. Man has to endure the measure of perfection that the Holy Spirit metes out for each and every one in this life. Only the body will still suffer and groan under sin but which will be raised up as a holy, perfected body at Christ's Second Coming.

The Holy Spirit with us always

But didn't Jesus promise that the Holy Spirit will be with us always, protecting us? Yes, the Holy Spirit will be, and is, with us always, but, in the execution of some of his offices, the Holy Spirit has to sometimes withhold blessings, administer guilt to our consciences, and afflict us: all to tutor, refine, and perfect our faith. Thus preserving us, the congregation, the ekklesia, the church, as a result.

Also, some of the offices of the Holy Spirit are finite and will be abolished. When the duties of the Holy Spirit have been fulfilled at the end of time, these offices would be terminated since there would be no need for comforting, counseling, and teaching the will of the Father in heaven. That is when man would be truly free to glorify God and not be able to sin.

We are inconsolable

After we have lost our eternal life, which we had before the fall, we have been inconsolable. That is why one of the offices of the Holy Spirit is to be a comforter. We can only be inconsolable if we are convinced of our sinful state, of course, otherwise we would be merrily slogging along the path that Eve found 'pleasing', wouldn't we?

They are not

The reprobate, on the other hand, who are not convinced of their sinful state, believe that they are in no danger at all. There are those who follow the Pope of Rome, who believe that the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in this life is deficient and incomplete. By implication, they contend that man is able to fill-in the failures of the Holy Spirit by imagining that there exists a purgatory where they can continue to intercede for the dead. They also imagine the ascended body of Christ to come down time after time for their sake and at their disposal in the mass.

Then there are those who cling to the Jewish faith, waiting for the Messiah while the prophecies have already been fulfilled. Even more miserable are those who cling to the Jewish faith but do not even recognize that they ought to expect the Messiah. The Psalmist speaks about men of this world and 'this life' in this way:

Psalm 17:14 O LORD, by your hand save me from such men, from men of this world whose reward is in this life. You still the hunger of those you cherish; their sons have plenty, and they store up wealth for their children.

Why are we still alive?

But if we lost our eternal life at the fall in the Garden, then why are we still living today, even after God had promised that we 'would surely die'? Some understand that threat to have meant that Adam and Eve would fall down instantly and that mankind would instantly perish forever. As we have shown, God purposed it that man should not die instantly and totally, but it is by His mercy alone that the privilege of temporary life has been effected. But his eternal life was lost, as we all know.

The first Covenant

The mercy that God bestowed was the promise, the first Covenant of Grace, which was announced to Adam and Eve, mankind, just before they were banished from the Garden. It was a calculated part of the revelation of God's plan for man, and it held a huge amount of comfort for Adam and Eve, and their posterity. They have just been banished from God's presence, expecting to be killed and never be with God again, but following the death sentence they also heard the promise that the one who deceived them will be destroyed by the One who was to come in the future.

Perhaps, as they walked from God's presence, they were already expecting the One who would crush the head of the devil. But it wouldn't happen for some time, as we now know.

That was the first promise that the Messiah would come. It was also the first announcement of the church of Christ, promised to the seed of Abraham. It is also the first revelation of God's predestination of the elect and proof in Scripture that the elect would be saved and not the reprobate.

Covenant also a prophesy

The words of the Covenant are also a prophesy, namely, that the devil will 'strike his heel' (which would not be mortal) but he (Christ) will 'crush your head,' which would be fatal. The infant church's road to victory would be strewn with affliction and strife. But Christ would take away their sins and free them from eternal death. That's victory!

Gospel to Spread to All People

But nobody knows who the elect are, and neither should anybody know. The gospel was designed to be spread among all people, for two reasons.

First, that the elect should hear it and that they might have a choice. But, this isn't a choice as one picks from a menu. They will recognize the voice of the Shepherd; and what may appear to be a choice will be an irresistible call; a call they so much desired to hear that they leave everything behind and follow Him.

Second, that the reprobate should hear it also and that they might have a choice, but, instead of desiring to follow the call they will follow their hatred towards the

Son and anything that pertains to the gospel. They will be without excuse at the final trial and judgment at the court of Christ.

Therefore, to spread the gospel in the world, among all men, without exception, is a vital task of the visible church.

It is more than a vital task, the church is obligated to spread the gospel to everyone, in action and example, privately and publicly, for the sake of Christ's sacrifice. Because to not proclaim Christ at every opportunity could cause a brother or sister, still trapped in darkness, to remain removed from God's glory for a longer time, which puts our convenience above the honor of Christ.

Christ at the Center

One may imagine the visible church in the post-Christ era as several concentric circles with Christ at the center. These circles stretch out over the whole world and at the outer circles one finds doctrines and beliefs that are at variance with the Word of God. As the believers gain a greater knowledge of God by studying and living the Word of God they are drawn closer to the center, to Christ, the Truth and Wisdom of God.

If the Church Stagnates

Sometimes, when there is stagnation in the church, God will direct and allow the visible church to be shaken and broken, not unlike a sifter would shake a sieve and crush lumps too large to separate, to separate the wanted particles from the unwanted ones causing some to be thrown to the outer circles of the church while others are drawn to the inner circle, closer to Christ. Sometimes even the elect might be thrown to the outer circles so that they may journey back to the center and in the process bring with them some of the elect that God placed in their way in the process.

It might be necessary to throw innocent believers into the deepest recesses of the penal system, for instance, so that members of the elect, who are trapped there, might be saved by their preaching and example of trust in the Lord. At times God raises up godly men specifically to venture into the outer circles of the world to win those who would only listen to those who are like them and speak their language, their tongue.

When we find ourselves at the burning edge of the furnace of affliction, we must praise God and glorify His Name for the honor to bring his glory to those who see us suffer.

The Holy Spirit Equips Brave Men and Women

The Holy Spirit equips these brave men and women with talent and strength to be able to go to the farthest reaches of the world and speak the languages that open the ears and the hearts of the elect. Not a babbling repetition of sounds, but to the Jew like a Jew, to the one under the law, like one under the law, and to the weak like one who is weak.

Church Persecuted

As the body of Christ was persecuted by the seed of the devil while embedded in the nation of Israel during the Old Testament times, from outside as well as from within Israel, in like manner, the body of Christ, now shown forth in the visible church, is also persecuted from both outside and inside the church. Those on the outside who seek the demise of the church, are visible and audible in their quest, and they are recognizable by all. However, those on the inside of the church are the ones that cause the most harm, because they masquerade as angels of light and prophets of righteousness to deceive the elect, if it were possible.

1CO 5:12 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? 13God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."

Outreach to Find the Elect

One of the offices of the Holy Spirit is to protect the church and provide for her edification and growth. The outreach to find the elect, wherever they may be, or whatever they believe, regardless of language or culture, is accomplished in many ways and falls under the directorship of the Holy Spirit directly, or immediately.

We see that the new environment of the church of Christ is full of stumbling blocks and that its education is not over yet. But instead of the law teaching, guiding and accusing them, the gospel teaches, leads, and convinces them of their sins, confirmed by the law.

The Holy Spirit, who came as Counselor and Comforter, now visibly leads, comforts, protects, guides and teaches the church, eagerly seeking the elect with evangelism, mission works, preaching, communion of the saints, discipline, and enjoyment of the sacraments. This drive to find the elect happens among all nations, until the full number has come in.

The gospel must be carried out to the corners of the earth so that not a single member of the elect is left out. All of the elect must come to faith and become members of His body before Christ returns.

Why is the Church Fragmented?

Why is the church then still persecuted and why is it so fragmented and full of dissent? Surely if God had planned all this, He would have ensured that the elect would grasp the gospel and be caught up in its teaching without rebellion and confusion. Why was the elect scattered all over the world and among different nations? Would God not have grouped them together, like He did in Israel, so that He could educate and teach them more effectively?

This is the same argument as the one that supposes that God should rather have ordained that man should glorify him forever and in the process compromising his free will. Man's education is not yet complete and scattering the elect among all

nations around the world is clearly part of God's plan and consistent with the teaching of Scripture.

God directs and permits the devil to persecute the church, fragment it and raise up men who twist the gospel and fragment the visible church, so that it can be carried to nations of different cultural and moral backgrounds, all for the sake of the elect.

Breaking up the Church

Breaking up the visible church into smaller pieces and scattering them over the globe, serves both to purify the church and to draw particles closer to Christ in new denominations, as well as to cast fragments into different cultures where the elect, who are caught up there, can be reached over time.

When an object is broken into smaller pieces its collective surface area is much larger than what it was when it was whole. So, too, the church becomes more penetrating and effective when it is fragmented into pre-ordained pieces and cast among different cultures and nations. Much like salt.

Not all cultures accept the language and concepts of any one culture, and the culture of the church of God is unique and different from any culture of the world. So, breaking the visible church into pieces with different understandings and convictions, carries the Word, though faulted, into the world where the Holy Spirit piques the interest of the elect and set them on their journey to the inner circle of the church - closer to Christ.

The enemies of Christ, on the other hand, are also rallied in opposition to the Word of God, and they become like fanatics, persecuting the believers and in so doing manifesting their destruction in this life as they squander many opportunities to repent and believe.

Even the spreading of Islam, Hinduism, Mormonism, and other hideous doctrines, is under the decree and directorship of God and serve both as an affliction for the church and as an on-ramp for the elect caught up among them. That is why it is better to pray that those caught up in these heathen faiths and derivatives of the gospel should come to the true knowledge of God rather than praying for the outright destruction of these false doctrines.

There is ample proof that this is the way God works to gather his congregation among all nations, especially when one sees how believers rise up from the most heathen of nations. They proclaim the gospel and their faith in Christ, sometimes against severe resistance and persecution of family, friends and government, but they persevere and bring forth fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Many mission works carry the true gospel into the world, side-by-side with variations and sometimes outright heathenism. They work in many countries, driving and penetrating like tentacles into the world, each one spreading their variation of the gospel. They sweep up many people into their teachings of which some stay faithful to the derivative gospel and others, the elect, seeking a greater

knowledge of God and thrusting closer to Christ. As they are drawn to Christ, they abandon their initial doctrines and reach out towards the truth, eager to proceed in that direction; desiring to glorify God in the manner that He prescribed.

Further outwards from the center of the church, we find satanic teachings that might even grab hold of some of the elect and, through terrifying ordeals, they too would be freed, saved as through fire, while the others are destroyed in their evil practices. There is not a single action or deed on earth, that is outside the control and directorship of God, all towards the final purpose of it all: To gather for Him a people who would desire to glorify Him.

The Last Times

Elect Separated

These are the last days, the last phase before the final entrance of the elect into the glory of God. There will not be another coming of Christ except the final one, which will finally separate the elect from the reprobate, the seed of Abraham from the seed of the devil, regardless of physical ancestry.

The Elect will all be Born Again

By the time Christ comes for the last time, all of the elect will have been born again, be believers and functional members of His body. Not a single one will have been missed, because when the book of life is opened, there will be no mention of good deeds, no mention of love, no mention of faith in Jesus, and no mention of sin. There will be just the name in the book of life of each one whom God recorded once only and finally before creation. Christ's exclamation on the cross 'it is finished' is certain and true.

God Ordained it all

It is, therefore, inescapable to conclude that God foreordained it all exactly as He willed it from before creation. In that pre-creation plan, it was ordained that man should succumb to the temptation of the devil; that Christ should make the ultimate sacrifice at the appropriate time to free the church from sin and lead it forcefully to collect all of the elect. His entire body had to be intact, consisting of all its members before the time for Him to come and take it home with Him.

All will be Fulfilled

The prophecies of the Old Testament will all have been fulfilled. The work of the church will be complete. The bride will meet the Groom, and the work of God, begun before creation, will have achieved its final purpose: having successfully gathered for Himself a people that glorify Him because they freely desire to do so.

It is evident, from what we have shown, that the way in which God planned the history of man was absolutely the only way in which it could be accomplished.