

Occasion: Second Sunday after Christmas [C]

Text: 1 Kings 3:4-15; Ephesians 1:3-14; Luke 2:40-52

Title: "According to Plan: Beginning to End"

Date: 01-03-2010

knowledge of the supernatural cause behind the creation of the world and no understanding of the divine plan for its end and the re-creation of a whole new heavens and new earth according to God's Grand Plan and Purpose for all that He has made.

Introduction:

In a review of the movie "2012", which came out in theaters in November 2009, Seth Shostak, of SETI (Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence), writes:

In late December, 2012, thanks to an unusual celestial alignment – or maybe just the expiration date of the Mayan calendar – our planet will be wracked and ruined. Look on the bright side: you can blow off your estimated tax payments for that year...

The idea that the Mayan calendar could tell you when the world is going to end is straight-out goofy. Heck, if the Mayans were this good at divining the future, you'd think their empire would still be around. As for cosmic alignments – well, they happen all the time, and no one seems the worse for wear. And indeed, what difference could they make? Work it out: even when Jupiter is closest to Earth, the force it exerts on our world is 20 thousand times weaker than that exerted by the Sun every day (and the influence of the other planets is far less than Jupiter's).

So except for those benighted souls who insist on confounding movies with reality, the whole thing is a tempest in a teacup, right? Isn't that what all the science types will be writing once the film hits the multiplex?

- > **Of course it is. But there's also this: doomsday for humans really will happen, at least if a few hundred million extinct species are any precedent. It's been estimated that 99.9 percent of all the critters that ever wiggled or waddled across this planet are past tense.**

In other words, and despite the fact that we blithely think of ourselves as the crown of creation, we're no more Nature's ultimate product than '56 Chevys were the last of the cars. Our species will come to an end, and, presumably, be replaced by a new model. < <http://www.seti.org/feature/2012-previews-of-the-review>

While the movie "2012" will no doubt lead some people to think about the end of the world, and how it may come about by some cataclysmic event in nature, it will also no doubt leave them well outside the reality of God's Plan for His creation. The review by Seth Shostak, expresses the view of many, that the universe exists and operates only by natural causes and the accidental origin of life through evolution. Thus, it offers NO



Setting:

Christmas reminds us that forces outside the natural realm act upon our world and our lives. The supernatural, although unseen, is real and ultimately has more influence on earth and its people than any natural cause. In Christmas, we celebrate the union of the supernatural and the physical, as in Christ, God has become flesh. The supernatural and the natural are one in Christ.

This miracle has taken place precisely because the supernatural – because God, has a reason for creating this world and all life upon it AND God has a plan underway to accomplish His purpose for creation. In the Epistle Lesson, the apostle Paul tells us that God has revealed a mystery to us, something that we could not discover with a microscope or a telescope, or in any laboratory or observatory. This mystery could only be discovered through a revelation from the supernatural, from God to us. Scripture tells us:

⁹And God made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, ¹⁰to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—**to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.** – Ephesians 1:9-10

To understand all human history, to see through the natural influences and occurrence in the world, we must always keep in mind that behind the curtain of this physical world is the supernatural, is God Himself. The world is on course to reach the purpose for which God created it – that is, for all things in heaven and on earth to come together under the Lordship of Christ. God created the world to be under the Rule of Christ. As we acknowledge this Truth, this reality, then everything else should be brought into conformity with this Truth.

Thus, as the apostle Paul begins his letter to the Ephesians, he writes about the purpose and the plan God has for His creation, and he writes about our place as individuals in God's plan. In the Grand Scheme of the universe, what is your place? Your purpose? Are you so small that you do not matter? Compared to the vast expanses of outer space are you only a spec of dust that is here today and gone tomorrow? Compared to the boundlessness of time, is your life's span only a flash in the darkness? Not according to God! Not according to His plan! You have a specific place in God's Grand Design and Purpose toward which everything in heaven and on earth is heading!

I. GOD'S PLAN, CONCEIVED IN ETERNITY:

We know the outcome of all things! God has told us that all things in heaven and on earth, in the spiritual realm and the physical realm will be brought together under the Lordship of Jesus. In harmony with what the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in

Ephesus, the apostle Paul also wrote to the Colossian Christians:

¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him. ¹⁷He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸And He is the head of the Body, the Church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, **so that in everything He might have the supremacy.** – *Colossians 1:15-18*

Everything that has happened since the first time God spoke in Scripture and said, **“Let there be...”** (Genesis 1) has happened with the outcome in God’s mind that all things would be under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. One day, everything in heaven and earth will be under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

What is your place in God’s Grand Plan when this happens? The apostle Paul wrote:

⁴For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. – *Ephesians 1:4*

When everything is brought under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, He will reign over a Kingdom that is pure, holy, righteous. Jesus will reign over a Kingdom where everyone is loved by Him and everyone will love Him with a pure and undivided heart. In that Kingdom everyone will do what is right and everyone will give and receive a pure and perfect love. It will be Paradise! Wouldn’t it be wonderful to live in Paradise? Wouldn’t it be wonderful to escape the chaos and confusion of this world? To leave behind terrorism and hatred, bitterness and fighting, poverty and hunger, budget deficits, national debt, taxes, endless debates, solutions that cause more problems than they solve? All history is heading toward the Kingdom that will bring everything under the Lordship of Jesus. And where will you be when that happens? **“⁴For God chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight.”** Before creation, God chose you to be in that holy and pure Kingdom! And God chose to fit you for life in that Kingdom by making you **“holy and blameless”**. Only those who are holy and blameless can live in that Kingdom under the pure and holy One Himself!

But you say, *“I am not pure! I am not holy! I am selfish and corrupt! I cannot possibly have a place in that Kingdom! Look at me, I’m a mess!”* Yes, right now, all of us are lost in selfishness and corruption. But it doesn’t have to remain that way. We were born in sin and under God’s condemnation. We were **“by nature objects of wrath”** (Ephesians 2:3) Yet, God will not abandon us to corruption and sin. He will recreate us, make us anew:

In love ⁵He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will—⁶to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One he loves. – *Ephesians 1:4-5*

So that we can live in the Kingdom under the Lordship of Jesus, God’s plan conceived in eternity, before time, included His adopting us back into His family, remaking us, recreating us in **“His image and His likeness”** (Genesis 1:26-27), so that we can be His

children. What a Plan! All things in heaven and earth will be brought under the Lordship of Christ! Jesus will rule over a pure and holy Kingdom of pure and holy people!

II. GOD’S PLAN, WORKED OUT IN TIME:

What God conceived in eternity, He is now working out in time in this world! That’s what Christ, that’s what Christmas, that’s what holy week, Good Friday and Easter Sunday are all about! Scripture says:

⁷In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace ⁸that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. – *Ephesians 1:7-8*

So that we might be holy and blameless, so that we may live forever under the Lordship of Christ, so that we may enjoy with many, many others the love and blessings of Christ, Jesus came into the world to redeem us. ‘Redeem’ means to buy, to buy back. We were destined to destruction, we were condemned and on our way to judgment. We are guilty and justice demands that we be punished for our guilt. Jesus took our place under justice, and Jesus took the punishment we deserve. We have been bought by His blood, so that the guilt for our sin has been taken away from us. Jesus lived under God’s Law and kept it for us. Jesus died under God’s judgment in our place, receiving the just condemnation of our sin. In this way, we are made holy and blameless, fit to live forever under the Lordship of Jesus. What a Plan! What love! What a blessing to be redeemed! What a blessing to have a place in the Kingdom of Christ!

¹³And you also were included in Christ when you heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴Who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of His glory. – *Ephesians 1:12-14*

To be in Christ is to be redeemed! To be in Christ is to be made holy and blameless—righteous before God! To be in Christ is to have no guilt, no shame, no record of sin! To be in Christ is to have the inheritance of the Kingdom when history comes to a conclusion and this corrupt world comes to an end.

Conclusion:

The universe is not a result of random acts that may create life or destroy it! The earth is not at the mercy of whatever nature may throw up against it. Whatever happens above the earth or on the earth, does not alter or ruin the Plan that God has for His Creation. Everything is on course, in Christ! Every year we celebrate Christmas, we celebrate God’s Plan of Redemption in Christ! Whether in 2012 or before or beyond that year, whatever happens, we can have confidence in God and His plan for creation. The redeemed can live in peace and praise.

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. – *Ephesians 1:4* AMEN!