

The Plan for Christmas

As we consider the month of December, we are often taken up with plans. Plans for parties, get togethers, family times, concerts (the Fort Wayne Philharmonic and Mannheim Steamroller are my two favorites, if I can squeeze them in), cookie-making (peanut butter cookies are the best!), visiting, Christmas around the Courthouse (December 6-7 in Columbia City), and the like. Sometimes folks sit down and say, "Okay, what's the plan for Christmas?" when it comes to having family celebrations and feasts. All this is as it should be.

Yet, did you ever think about God's plan for Christmas? Galatians 4:4-6 tells us, in words given by the Holy Spirit, "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'"

1. The plan was conceived by God. As such, it is the perfect plan, with NO mistakes in conception, timing, execution, and completion. A good many folks think that they can come up with a better plan. All other plans involve some use of *works* by people in order to be saved. God's plan is by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross (Ephesians 2:8-9). God declares that His plan included Himself as Redeemer -- "Yet I *am* the LORD your God ... For there is no Saviour besides Me" (Hosea 13:4). He planned redemption through Christ, He carried it out in Christ, and He will bring all to completion for Christ.

2. It was established from the beginning. Actually, the plan was conceived by God long before the beginning, in eternity past. "He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Peter 1:20) Both Peter and Paul use this phrase, "before the foundation of the world," because Jesus Himself used it in His High Priestly Prayer in John 17. It was a common theme for the preaching of the Apostles.

God had a plan that was in place before He said, "Let there be light." That plan included the creation of man, the redemption of man, and the glorification of man, all before the world began.

3. To demonstrate God's grace and justice. That this plan was a grand demonstration of all that God wants to show to a watching

universe is a key aspect of it all. Some speak of the "problem of evil," yet God Himself permitted the existence and temporary endurance of evil for the very purpose of exhibiting *His* wisdom, *His* power, *His* love, *His* mercy, *His* grace, and *His* ultimate justice. God determined that the perfect way to show all these attributes was to permit evil (yet *not* originate evil Himself), and this would be the backdrop against which all His attributes would shine.

4. By saving a people for Himself. God decided that the plan would include people. That is, you and me, if we are in Christ. He wanted to have a special people all for Himself—whom He created, whom He redeemed from sin, whom He would glorify in the fullness of all things.

5. To give Him glory. What is the ultimate purpose of the Plan of Salvation? To save people? Yes, and much more. He can and does and will save many for their own benefit, yet the ultimate point is that He will receive glory again and again throughout eternity. A Gospel message that begins and ends with man's salvation is a foreshortened one, as it focuses on the wrong object—man. The Gospel includes the salvation of people, and the everlasting glory of God. God has done this, through His perfect grace, that He might receive all praise and honor, every part of the plan of salvation from creation to glorification and beyond.

So, as you figure out what will be happening in your own life in December and beyond, recall that God had a plan. That plan includes you, redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Rejoice, give thanks, sing, worship, and tell! The Plan of Salvation is good news for you and all who believe. To the glory of God forever and ever! Amen!

He wanted me to remind you!

Pastor Craig Alan Myers