

What Can Man Know About God's Purposes and Work?

A Study Outline

I. Introduction

- A. Somewhat conflicting messages seem to be given in God's word: Solomon says you cannot know His work (Eccl. 3:11; 8:17; 11:5).
- B. Yet, God says His people can search and understand even the deep truths of Him, and they are not hidden (I Cor. 2:9-12).
- C. What is the truth of these issues?

II. What God reveals to us about His purposes and work in heaven and on the earth.

- A. He has called a people to be saved from death.
 - 1. The verdict for sin is death (Gen. 2:15-17; Prov. 14:12; Rom. 6:23).
 - 2. These people were chosen "... before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:3-12).
 - Verse 4: "he has chosen "is from the Greek *exelexato* (Strong 1586), meaning "chosen out of", referring to a particular time in the past when God chose individuals for salvation, a time before the "... *foundation of the world*"
foundation (Strong 2602) = *katabole*, "a deposition, i.e. founding; fig. conception."
world (Strong 2889) = *kosmos*, "orderly arrangement."
 - 3. The elect were *foreknown* by God the Father (I Peter 1:2); Jesus Christ was also fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, just as we have been (I Peter 1:20).
 - 4. God's people were "... *predestined* to be conformed to the image of His Son ..." (Rom. 8:29-30; 11:2).
 - predestined* J(Strong 4309) = *proorizo*, "to limit in advance, i.e.(fig.) predetermine."
 - 5. The elect are called to life eternal (Matt. 25:44-46; Mark 10:26-31; John 3:15-16; Rev. 20:4).
- B. The Father and Christ have given us doctrines that can be summarized as given in Heb. 6:1-2:
 - 1. Repentance from dead works
 - 2. Faith toward God
 - 3. Baptisms
 - 4. The laying on of hands
 - 5. The resurrection of the dead
 - 6. *Eternal judgement*
 - eternal* (Strong 166) = *aionios*, "times past, present, or future"; from *aion* (Strong 165), "an age".
 - judgement* (Strong 2917) = *krima*, "a decision (the function or the effort, for or against)."
- C. God and the saints will put down all the works of evil and of Satan.
 - 1. The demons know they will be destroyed (Luke 4:34).
 - 2. Jesus stated that He came into the world to destroy the works of Satan ().
 - 3. Satan and the demons' ultimate fate is to be first bound for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-3), and then destroyed (Ezek. 28:18; Mal. 4:3).
- D. Our lives are to be lived in the spirit which God gives, that codes for the character of Himself

placed within us and summarized by the commandments.

1. The commandments that were external, on tablets of stone, have now been placed within us (Ex. 20:2-17; Heb. 8:7-13).

2. God's qualities of character are expressed in the spiritual gifts He gives us (Gal. 5:22-26; Rom. 12:1-21).

3. Life in the spirit is to be a total sacrifice to God (Gal. 2:20).

E. God leads His people in the direction *He* chooses (Matt. 6:10; Rom 12:1-2; Ps. 25:12).

III. What Solomon and others say about what we can know about God's purposes for the saints.

A. "... He has set the *world* in their *heart*, so that no man can find out the work that God *makes* from the beginning to the end (Eccl. 3:11).

world (Strong 5769) = *olom*, "concealed, i.e. the vanishing point; gen. time out of mind (past or future), i.e. eternity."

heart (Strong 3820) = *leb*, "the heart, the feelings, the will, or the intellect; the center of anything."

makes (Strong 6213) = *asah*, "to do or make."

B. "Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun, because though a man labor to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea further, though a wise man *think* to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it" (Eccl. 8:17).

think (Strong 559) = *amar*, "to say".

C. "As you know not what is the *way* of the *spirit*, nor how bones grow in the womb of her that is with child, even so you know not the works of God who makes all" (Eccl. 11:5).

way (Strong 1870) = *derek*, "a road (as trodden); fig. a course of life or mode of action."

spirit (Strong 7307) = *ruwach*, "wind; by resemblance breath; fig. life, anger, unsubstantiality; by extens. a region of the sky; by resemblance spirit (but only of a rational being)."

D. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?" (Rom. 11:33-34).

E. "O Lord, how great are Your works! and Your thoughts are very deep" (Ps 92:5).

thoughts (Strong 4284) = *machashebeth*, "a contrivance, i.e. (concr.) a testure, machine, or (abstr.) intention, plan (whether bad, a plot; or good, advice)."

deep (Strong 6009) = *amaq*, "to be (or make) deep (lit. or fig.)."

F. "Which does great things; and there is no search; marvelous things, till there be no number" (Job 5:9).

G. "Can you by searching find out God? Can you find out the Almighty? Unto perfection? It is high as heaven: what can you do? Deeper than hell; what can you know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea" (Job 11:7-9).

IV. How does one resolve these seemingly conflicting views towards man's purpose and work on earth?

A. The destiny of man to become a king and priest on earth (Rev. 5:10), and to live by the spirit that God has given us, as living sacrifices to be led by Him totally, is well understood. Our will is now the Father's will, as in Christ's life (John 5:19).

B. Yet, the details of how God works out that will of Him in us is usually obscure. For instance,

1. When and why we were born when we were, and in what society and country

2. Who we marry (if we marry), and the children we have

3. What sort of job we have and the education we get

4. Where we live at different times in our lives

5. Who our friends will be

6. When we are called into the Work of God, and what we do within the Work

C. None of these things we can really understand, except to acknowledge that “all things work together for good” (Rom. 8:28), even though we may not understand how they do; for example, how can calamities in our lives work for good?

D. We must acknowledge that God knows the end from the beginning, so He understands how things will turn out in the end. As humans in the flesh we are limited in such knowledge of the future, which may be the essence of what Solomon, Job, David, and Paul talked about in the Scriptures.