

Was Jesus Plan “B”?

By C. Baxter Kruger

The apostle Paul declares that the Father “predestined us to adoption as sons [and daughters] through Jesus Christ to Himself” (Ephesians 1:5). There are three huge points in this short declaration. The first is the idea of predestination, the second the purpose of our adoption, and the third is that this was planned to be accomplished through Jesus Christ.

Many are horrified by the idea of predestination, but it is actually at the heart of the gospel. For it means that we were known and loved, named and claimed by the Father himself before the foundation of the world. The Calvinists have done a hatchet job on predestination by limiting the Father’s heart and love to a select few, to the exclusion of others. But don’t let their error keep you from seeing that the Father himself loved you before he created the world and it has never crossed his mind to stop.

For Paul, the God who predestines is not the isolated, faceless, nameless, omni-being, or the cold, unapproachable, cosmic judge of our fallen imaginations. The God who predestines is Jesus’ Father. And this relationship is not sad or lonely or boring. This relationship is alive with other-centered love, with passion and fellowship. The Father’s purpose for us flows out of his relationship with his Son. So it is not surprising that Paul’s thinking moves from this relationship between the Father and the Son to our adoption. Could anything be more stunning than reading that we were predestined by Jesus’ Father to be adopted into his family?

A real relationship

Adoption means far more than being given legal status before a distant divine being. Status is not a bad thing, of course, but it is nowhere near real relationship. The gift to be given to us in adoption is nothing less than the Father himself. Read the verse again, “He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself.” What the Father desires is a real relationship with us, not mere legalities. He wants communion, fellowship, shared life, not religious and external obedience to a set of rules. He wants us to

know him and his love with his Son. His plan is to give us a real place in the life and fellowship and glory that he shares with his Son and Spirit. We are to be drawn in love and grace into the Trinitarian life of God. This is the truth that tells us how valuable and wanted and cherished we are.

When Paul glances back through history into eternity to find the rhyme and reason of it all, he sees the beautiful relationship between the Father, Son and Spirit and then he sees the decision to give us a personal place within it. That is what adoption means, and Paul tells us that this was the plan before the creation of the world. But as rich and beautiful and almost unbelievable as this news is, Paul adds one more revolutionary point.

Long before the creation

Who is responsible for bringing the Father’s dreams for us to fruition? Are we dealing here with a great dream of the Father for us but no strategy for its being worked out? Were the Father’s plans entrusted to Adam, to Israel, to the church? Note carefully what Paul says, “He predestined us to adoption as sons *through Jesus Christ*” (italics mine). Jesus’ coming is not plan “B” quickly thought up and implemented after the failure of plan “A” in Adam. Jesus is the original plan, the alpha and the omega, the eternal Word of God, the good shepherd appointed before the creation of the world.

What Paul is telling us is that the Father’s Son was “on the road to becoming flesh,” to borrow a phrase from the eminent Reformed theologian, Thomas F. Torrance, before the first particle of creation was called into being. The fall of Adam, the sin of humanity, the calling of Israel and the giving of the Law, all fall under the heading of “the coming of the Father’s Son.”

Before all these things happened in our history, God had purposed to make us his own through adoption by sending his Son, Jesus Christ, to make our redemption possible. Our faith rests “on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time” (Titus 1:2). ●



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