

When Did God Form His Immortality and Redemption Plan?

by Raymond C. Faircloth

God's Purposes "Made Known from Long Ago" Rather Than Existing "from Eternity"

Acts 15:17, 18:

POOR TRANSLATION

NKJV: "Known to God *from eternity* are all His works."

KJV: "Known unto God are all his works *from the beginning of the world.*"

Here the KJV and NKJV have mistranslated *aionos* as "world" and "eternity" rather than as "long ago."

BETTER TRANSLATION

Weymouth:

"...the Lord, who has been making these things known **from ages long past.**"

ESV: "the Lord, who makes these things known **from of old.**"

HCBC: "the Lord who does these things, which have been known **from long ago.**"

So these verses simply inform us that God's immortality plan was made known "from long ago." They do not inform us about when the plan was formed in God's mind. Can we know more specifically when the plan was formed?

God's Purposes Formed "from the Beginning"

❖ "In the beginning was the word (declared purpose or message of the purpose) ... all things were made through it..." (*John 1:1, 3*).

God's immortality plan appears to have formed in His mind "in the beginning." This is confirmed in 1 John 1:1, 2: "That which was from the beginning ... the eternal life (life in the age to come)..." Because God had no beginning this purpose could not have formed in eternity [*wrongly expressed in the NKJV*]. The prime clue for us to know when the plan formed comes from Genesis 1:1 which states that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Therefore, God's purpose formed in His mind at some **specific time prior to** His bringing of the creation of the universe into actual existence. The plan for and the reality of the universe is expressed in Revelation 4:11b: "...for you created all things, and by your will they existed [*in God's mind*] and were created [*in reality*]." However, because of the sin of Adam, a redemption aspect was added to this immortality plan. This addition showed God's flexibility so that His immortality plan might be accomplished. So when did the redemption part of the plan become evident?

The Redemption Feature of God's Immortality Plan Was Formed "before the Ages Began"

2 Timothy 1:9b:

POOR TRANSLATION

KJV: "...but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us **in Christ Jesus before the world began...**"

NKJV: "...but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus *before time began...*"

NASB: "but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus *from all eternity...*"

The Greek word *aionios* does not mean "eternity" but is a reference to "the ages" as shown below:

BETTER TRANSLATION

Young's Lit: "...but according to His own purpose and grace, that was given to us in Christ Jesus, **before the times of the ages...**"

ESV: "...but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us *in Christ Jesus before the ages began...*" *The Holman Bible gives the same.*

NRSV: "...but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us *in Christ Jesus before the ages began...*"

So the redemption part of God's immortality plan did not come into God's mind before the universe was created; but rather "before the ages began."

WHEN DID "THE AGES" BEGIN?

The Bible notes only two ages: "in (1) this age or (2) the *age to come*" (Matt. 12:32. So at what point "**before the ages began**" did the plan for the Messiah and redemption come into existence? As will be shown this would not have been before Adam's creation, but rather with "*the founding of the world.*" alienated from God. However, we need first of all to examine what the phrase "*the founding of the world*" means and the various circumstances which occurred **before** that time and those which occurred **from** that time.

Messiah and Christians Were Foreknown "Before the Foundation of the World"

- ❖ "...but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was **foreknown before the foundation of the world** but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you" *(1 Peter 1:19, 20).*
- ❖ "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you **loved me before the foundation of the world**" *(John 17:24).*
- ❖ "...just as He **chose us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we would be holy and blameless before him in love" *(Eph. 1:4).*

What Does "Foundation of the World" Mean?

MEANING OF "FOUNDATION" (Gk. *KATABOLE*)

From Vine's Expository Dictionary:

Lit., a casting down, is used, (a) of **conceiving seed**, Heb 11:11; (b) of a foundation, as that which is laid down, or in the sense of founding; metaphorically, of the foundation of the world; in this respect two phrases are used, (1) **from the foundation of the world** (2) **before the foundation of the world.**

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon gives:

1. a throwing or laying down...the injection or depositing of semen in the womb.
2. **a founding** (laying down a foundation)...to found a posterity.

Hastings Dictionary of the Bible states that: "In the frequent phrase 'from the foundation of the world' the word is active, meaning 'founding,'" p.273.

MEANING OF "WORLD" (Gk. *KOSMOS*)

The Greek philosophers sometimes applied *kosmos* to the entire visible creation, with Pythagoras being the first to use it in this sense. However, this sense is not the one primarily used in the New Testament. So although some Greek-English Lexicons, in drawing from Greek philosophy, give 'universe' as a meaning of the word *kosmos* they also give: all humanity and **humanity alienated from God.**

NOTE: It is the Greek word *ge* which refers to the physical planet Earth.

The Scofield Reference Notes comment on the phrase "book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." in Revelation 13:8:

Kosmos, summary: In the sense of **the present world-system**, the **ethically bad** sense of the word, refers to the "order," "arrangement," under which Satan has organized **the world of unbelieving mankind** upon his cosmic principle of force, greed, selfishness, ambition, and pleasure. Matthew 4:8,9; John 12:31; 14:30; 18:36; Ephesians 2:2; 6:12; 1 John 2:15-17. This world-system is imposing and powerful with armies and fleets; is often outwardly religious, scientific, cultured, and elegant; but, seething with national and commercial rivalries and ambitions, is upheld in any real crisis only by armed force, and is **dominated by Satanic principles.**

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia says:

Third, kosmos indicates **the ethical order in which human responsibility and human sinfulness** stand in relationship to God. Thus “world” can have a highly negative connotation, indicating a place of corruption, a place antagonistic and antipathetic to God, a place in the grip of the demonic “powers.”....This third meaning is the principal theological usage in the Pauline and Johannine writings, *volume 4. pp. 1114-15.*

Trench’s Synonyms of the New Testament states that:

In that sense, *kosmos* is nearly equivalent to *oikoumene*, and then to the people themselves, to the sum total of people living in the world. From that meaning an ethical use of *kosmos* developed that referred to all who were not of the *ekklesia* and who therefore were **alienated from the life of God** and were his enemies because of their wicked deeds...the last senses of kosmos was utterly unknown to the entire heathen world... pp. 228-9.

NOTE: *oikoumene* means “inhabited earth”

The Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words:

Finally, *Kosmos* can stand for **humanity** (cf. Jn 3:19; 2 Cor 5:19), where, especially in Paul and John, it designates the place and object of God’s saving activity.

As early as Paul, the term *kosmos* is given a typically anthropological and historical stamp ...God passes judgment on the *kosmos* ... In Jn. *Kosmos* almost always denotes **the world of humans**... p. 707-8.

EXAMPLES OF USAGE OF “KOSMOS”

- ❖ “...the whole **world** (Gk. *kosmos*) lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19).
- ❖ “The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the **world** (Gk. *kosmos*)!”” (John 1:29).

Many more Scripture examples could be given of this usage e.g. John 11:9, 10, Rom. 3:19, 5:12; John 6:33; 1 John 4:14. So the NT general usage of *kosmos* is a reference to humanity and in particular to humanity alienated from God. Therefore, the phrase “the foundation of the world” is a reference to the time and circumstances when the present world-system of unbelieving mankind which Satan has organized came into existence. When exactly did those circumstances occur?

“The Foundation of the World” Was After Adam Sinned

NOT BEFORE EVE’S CREATION

- ❖ “For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, “As I swore in my wrath, “They shall not enter my rest,” although his **works were finished from the foundation of the world**” (Heb. 4:3).

Because Eve was the last of God’s creations after which He began His rest “**from the foundation of the world**”, it would appear that this time would start at some point during Eve’s lifetime and clearly after Adam was created and so long after Earth was created. Therefore, the time of Eve’s creation cannot be when the world was founded. As shown above “the world” is generally a term for **mankind alienated from God**. This circumstance came about the moment Adam sinned and placed himself and his future offspring under the power of Satan. **So “the foundation of the world” must have occurred no earlier than the time when Adam sinned.** Yet was it at the time of his sinning? Or was it when he and Eve produced children? Jesus gives the answer:

- ❖ “...so that the **blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world**, may be charged against this generation, **from the blood of Abel** to the blood of Zechariah” (Luke 11:50, 51).

So the time of *the foundation of the world*, is closely associated with the event of the shedding of *the blood of Abel*.

When the Alienated World Was Founded

The dictionary definition of *founding* is: “To originate or establish; create, set up.” By sinning Adam was indeed the founder of a world alienated from God (*Satan being the instigator of the sinning*), but the actual

founding would only occur once Adam and Eve brought into existence the first ones of this alienated world, namely their sons Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:1, 2). So the specific **time for “the foundation of the world” was when Adam and Eve produced children.**

The First Redemption Statement Was Made After Adam Sinned but before Children Were Born

- ❖ “I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall **bruise his heel**” (*Gen. 3:15*).

As a result of this conflict the ultimate offspring or seed – the Messiah (Gal. 4:4) would be “bruised in the heel.” Such an attack by a literal snake would demonstrate an attempt to kill or destroy the one bitten. However, the term serpent in the account is descriptive of Satan himself; and the attack with intent to destroy came centuries later when Satan manoeuvred individuals to execute Jesus. Nevertheless, this attempt to destroy Messiah failed because, although Jesus died, God resurrected him to immortality and his death was accepted by God as the great sacrifice for the redemption of alienated mankind. So the prophecy in Genesis 3:15 helps us to gauge when the redemption feature of the immortality plan was formed in God’s mind.

The Redemption Feature Is Connected with “The Foundation of the World”

*THE MESSIANIC LAMB WAS FOREKNOWN **BEFORE** CAIN AND ABEL’S BIRTHS*

- ❖ “...but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of **a lamb** without blemish or spot. He was **foreknown before** *the foundation of the world* but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you” (*1 Peter 1:19, 20*).

This would be when the Genesis 3:15 prophecy was uttered after Adam had sinned. We also learn that God “loved” Messiah and also had chosen a body of Christians “*in him before the foundation of the world*” (John 17:24, Eph. 1:4).

*THE LAMB WAS FOREKNOWN AS SLAIN **FROM** THE TIME OF CAIN AND ABEL’S BIRTHS*

- ❖ “All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of **the lamb slain from** *the foundation of the world*” (*Rev. 13:8 NKJ*).
- ❖ “Nor was it to **offer himself** repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he would have had to **suffer repeatedly since** *the foundation of the world*. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (*Heb. 9:25, 26*).

The Bible record shows that sacrifices started to be offered in Cain and Abel’s time and therefore since “the founding of the world.” This established the method God would eventually use, in Messiah, in the redemption part of His immortality plan. In comparing 1 Peter 1:19, 20 with Revelation 13:8 we are further enabled to narrow down the time when the redemption feature of the immortality plan came into existence i.e. between the time of Adam’s sinning and the birth of his children.

Further Redemption Features “Hidden Since the Foundation of the World”

- ❖ “I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter **what has been hidden since** *the foundation of the world*” (*Matt. 13:35*).
- ❖ “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the **kingdom prepared** for you **from** *the foundation of the world*’ (*Matt. 25:34*).
- ❖ “...And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not **written in the Book of Life from** *the foundation of the world*, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is” (*Rev. 17:8b*).

Given the understanding that “*the founding of the world*” was after Adam sinned, it is clear that the kingdom was prepared at that time and that names were being entered in the book of life only after that time, no doubt, starting with Abel’s name.

God Did Not Predestine Adam to Sin

In summarizing the information so far we see that the first prophecy for a future Messiah who would redeem the world was given soon after the time that Adam sinned but before the time that his children came into existence—that is, “**before the founding of the world**” of **mankind alienated from God**. If such a redemption feature had been purposed before the creation of the universe or the creation of Adam it would mean that God had predestined or foreseen that Adam would sin. This would have **brought into question God’s love and justice** because Adam would have been doomed to failure before he even existed! Factually **redemption was not required until after Adam had sinned**; so there really was no need for a plan of redemption to form in God’s mind before Adam sinned. If, in fact, God had foreknown or foreseen that Adam definitely would have sinned, there would have been no point to the Garden of Eden test. Indeed it would have been farcical. For example, God did not know the outcome of His testing of Abraham when He commanded him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice (Gen. 22:12). Please see studies 4 and 5.

Conclusion

God formed His immortality plan for humans at some specific time before He created the universe. Then, because Adam sinned, God added a redemption feature to the immortality plan. This feature involved the future bringing forth of a Messiah who would firstly be a sacrificial lamb to pay for Adam’s sin and who secondly would be the world ruler along with a chosen body of immortal humans. Messiah’s rulership will bring God’s immortality plan to fruition when “the **kingdom prepared** for you **from the foundation of the world**” is established on earth. The understanding that the redemption aspect to the immortality plan was added after Adam’s sin demonstrates that God did not predestine that Adam would sin, but rather that He expected obedience and therefore success from Adam as His creation that he had declared “very good” (Gen. 1:31).

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