



Daily Verse and Comment

Acts 15:14-18

(14) Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. (15) And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written:

(16) *"After this I will return*

And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down;

I will rebuild its ruins,

And I will set it up;

(17) *So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD,*

Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name,

Says the LORD who does all these things." (18) "Known to God from eternity are all His works.

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In [Acts 15:14-18](#), the apostle James makes an astounding series of statements following Peter's address to the assembled elders. Notice how clearly [God](#) states that **He** initiates His works through men. Acts 10 relates the story of the conversion of Cornelius and his house. Neither Peter, whom God sent, nor Cornelius, who received him, knew of the other's existence. God, working in both men, opened the door and brought them together.

God Himself pledges to rebuild the tabernacle of David. Certainly, He works through men, who, on the surface, appear to observers to be doing the work. Nevertheless, it is the invisible God who initiates and enables the rebuilding by determining when it will begin, who among men will work on it, and how completely they will finish it. He also gives gifts to those concerned to bring it about. Surely, God activates, sustains, and completes.

The Living Bible renders verse 18 as, "That is what the Lord says, who reveals His plans made from the beginning." How carefully crafted are His plans? How detailed are they? Has anything been left to chance? One thing is

clear: He is a Creator who knows where He is going and has known from the outset of the project. He made His plans, and they proceed as and when He planned. When we begin to think of what James says here in terms of all the nations of the earth as well as the church, we are considering events of tremendous magnitude involving billions of people and millennia of time.

But we need to make this more personal.

Paul writes in [Ephesians 1:4-5](#), ". . . just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of [the world](#), that we should be holy and without blame before Him in [love](#), having predestined us to adoption as sons by [Jesus Christ](#) to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. . . ." *Predestined* means "marked out in advance" or "appointed beforehand." Verse 4 indisputably says this occurred "before the foundation of the world." When we combine this with [Acts 15:18](#), this event must have occurred some time before what happens in [Genesis 1:2-26](#).

Is this a generality that predestines only the existence of a church and not the individuals who would comprise it? The overall impression of the context in combination with other passages suggests an answer of "No," but it is not certain. It can be taken as a generality, which is indeed a safe conclusion. Regardless, Paul's words describe a Creator who is not only actively working toward an ultimate end, but also toward specific intermediate accomplishments, such as the church. He is the One in control, moving things in whatever direction they need to go. It begins to become clear that events relating directly to God's purpose of reproducing Himself do not happen randomly. One should not have the impression that God sits at the controls in heaven constantly making adjustments to accommodate for what He did not foresee we would do down here.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[God's Sovereignty and the Church's Condition \(Part One\)](#)

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