

## From Start To Finish

### Mending Our Spiritual Nets

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Please turn to Hebrews 11:3. I want to look at the Greek word there translated “framed” today. It is only used 15 times in the Scriptures, but as you will see, it really delivers a punch. The first part of verse 3,

**Hebrews 11:3** By faith we understand that the worlds [ages] were framed by the word of God. . . .

The Greek verb translated “framed” is *katartizo*. Many modern translations render it “created,” or “made,” in that passage, but its meaning is quite a bit differently nuanced, as we will see. Please turn to Matthew 4, for *katartizo*’s first appearance as we begin to look more deeply at its meaning.

**Matthew 4:21 (ESV)** And going on from there he [Christ] saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and He called them.

John and James were not “creating” their nets, not “making or building” them, but essentially “re-creating” them—“restoring” them. Under the weight of water and fish, the strands making up a net would break in time. Eventually, this process would render them useless. If the fishermen were to remain in business, they needed constantly to mend them, and attend to them. It was their way of tending the garden. Notice this usage in II Corinthians 13, where Paul wraps up his epistle.

**II Corinthians 13:11 (MSG)** And that’s about it, friends. Be cheerful. Keep things in good repair. Keep your spirits up.

“Keep things in good repair.” This is *katartizo*. In this case, it is not God who is restoring the world at creation or James and John fixing nets. Rather, we are to *katartizo* to maintain things on-going. Other translations tell us to “mend your ways,” “put yourselves in order,” “aim for restoration,” “repair whatever is broken,” “set things right.” So, the focus is not on initial creation, but on restoration, on maintenance.

Please, turn over to Galatians 6. Here, we see another example of our part in the restoration process.

**Galatians 6:1 (ESV)** Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.

Again, restore here is *katartizo*. While most of us do not mend nets today, we all understand entropy; things wearing out. Women mend their children’s clothing. Men maintain their cars. That may mean crawling under the hood at times in order to perform major maintenance, replacing fatigued parts, putting the car in operating order as part of preparing for a trip. We do this in preparation for the Feast. We are not creating the car, not forming or framing it. The manufacturer has already done that. Rather, we are acting to maintain it, ensuring its fitness. This is *katartizo*.

Turning over to I Peter 5, we will see an example where God does the mending. Peter writes,

**I Peter 5:10 (ESV)** And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”

Restore there is *katartizo*. It is one of four things God does for us at times.

Now, let us consider another aspect of *katartizo*. If you stop to think about it, at creation, God restored what Satan had messed up; He fixed it. But in doing so, He added some things. This adding value is a part of the meaning of *katartizo* as well. God added plants and animals which apparently were not there before Satan had befouled the face of the earth. Then, He added man. And, finally, He created the Sabbath for man—He added it.

Restoration can involve adding in order to make things better. This is not an alien concept to us. Frequently, when people restore an old house, they add new features to it, modernize it.

When I was a kid, we were not pleased to accept a car as it came to us. We added an aftermarket steering wheel, a new suspension, an updated radio, a two-barrel carburetor—or two or three. We were well advised to do so, as God tells us to dress and keep the garden—or, our cars. And, of course, that dressing also included a new paint job. All that is entailed in the idea behind *katartizo*. We boys were making our cars fit for the work we wanted them to perform, adding value all the while.

*Katartizo* carries with it the idea of fitting out, or equipping, with the implication of adding value, making better.

**Hebrews 11:3 (AMPC)** By faith we understand that the worlds [during the successive ages] were framed (fashioned, put in order, and equipped for their intended purpose) by the word of God.

To see another example of *katartizo* with this connotation, please turn to I Thessalonians 3. Here, the apostle Paul notifies the congregation of God at Thessalonica that that he and Timothy,

**I Thessalonians 3:10 (ISV)** Pray very hard night and day that we may see you again face to face, so that we may equip [*katartizo*] you with whatever is lacking in your faith.

The Amplified Bible actually uses the term “mend and make good whatever may be lacking.” Other versions use the verb restore or supply whatever might be needed.

*Katartizo* has in it the root “artios,” an adjective which means perfect. It is only used once, in II Timothy 3:17. You do not need to turn there.

**II Timothy 3:17 (AMPC)** So that the man of God may be complete and proficient, well fitted and thoroughly equipped [*katartizo*] for every good work.

Other translations use the adjectives “competent,” or “fully qualified.” In context, Paul is saying that God gifts us with His Word to perfectly fit us out for the task ahead. That is why some translations render *katartizo* with the verb “perfect” like in,

**I Thessalonians 3:10 (ASV)** . . . may perfect that which is lacking in your faith.

With that, please turn to Hebrews 13; actually, it is the benediction at the end of the book.

**Hebrews 13:20-21 (AMPC)** Now may the God of peace [Who is the Author and Giver of peace], Who brought again from among the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood [that sealed, ratified] the everlasting agreement (covenant, testament), [now, here is the gloss on *katartizo*] strengthen (complete, perfect) and make you what you ought to be and equip you with everything good that you may carry out His will; [while He Himself] works in you and accomplishes that which is pleasing in His sight.

God properly and thoroughly equips—gifts—us with what we need. All of that is behind the verb *katartizo*.

Please turn to I Corinthians 1. You see, there is still more to *katartizo*. When you mend a net, you join loose ends together. I am going to be reading from the New Century Version.

**I Corinthians 1:10 (NCV)** I beg you. . . by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that all of you agree with each other and not be split into groups. I beg that you be completely joined together by having the same kind of thinking and the same purpose.

It takes three English words to carry the idea of *katartizo*: “Completely joined together.” Perfectly fit together. Perfectly united. When God restored the earth, it was “very good,” not a sloppy job. There is nothing sloppy or haphazard about God’s works with us as well.

Please, turn to Hebrews 10. There is yet another thrust behind *katartizo*. I touched upon this meaning earlier, but this meaning certainly deserves more comment.

**Hebrews 10:4-5 (ESV)** For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me.”

The verb prepared is *katartizo*. Other translations render it, “made ready,” or “made fit.” When you mend your nets, you are preparing them for the next day’s fishing. When God equips us for the work to which He has called us, He is in fact preparing us for that work. That preparation is a gift. He is gifting us in order to make us ready. Some translators actually do catch the idea of gifting. The Contemporary English Version puts it this way,

**Hebrews 10:5 (CEV)** Sacrifices and offerings are not what you want, but you have given me my body.

That is a very interesting concept in terms of the Fatherhood of God. The New Living Translation renders it, “You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings. But you have given me a body to offer.” The concept of preparation behind *katartizo* definitely carries with it the idea of gifting.

I will not spend a lot of time on this, but you may want to write down. I am going to read it from the *Good News Translation*. The psalmist says of God:

**Psalm 139:15 (GNT)** When my bones were being formed, carefully put together in my mother's womb, when I was growing there in secret, you knew that I was there.

The evidence is clear that God also formed our bodies, wove them, as the King James Version has it. I think we understand that, even then, before we were born, God was building for us a body, gifting us with the talents and abilities we would use as we later became living sacrifices for Him. That gifting is definitely part of the meaning of *katartizo*.

Well, we have looked at about 10 of the 15 occurrences of *katartizo*, but we cannot miss this one more, found in Matthew 21. The context is Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Here, Matthew uses *katartizo* in quoting Psalm 8:2,

**Matthew 21:16 (ESV)** And they said to him [Christ], "Do you hear what these [folk] are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes. And, have you never read, "Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise'?"

The verb "prepared," there, is *katartizo*. *Katartizo*, we have seen, means more than simply to create. It means to maintain the creation, as to work and keep the garden, to fix, repair, restore, fit out, thoroughly equip, join together perfectly, mend, and gift. That is probably is primary New Testament thrust: to gift.

What does the verb mean at as appears in the Old Testament Hebrew in Psalm 8:2, to which you can be turning? Well, the Hebrew verb does not really carry the same meaning as the Greek verb *katartizo*. I will read from the *God's Word Translation*.

**Psalm 8:2 (GWT)** From the mouths of little children and infants, you have built a fortress against your opponents . . .

"Built" is the English verb that appears as *katartizo* in Matthew 21:16.

**Psalm 8:3-4 (ESV)** You have built a fortress against your opponents to silence the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens, the creation of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have set in place—what is a mortal that you remember him or the Son of Man that You take care of him?

Again, the verb we are looking at is here translated *built*, and the verb translated as *katartizo* in Matthew 21. But, before we look at it more specifically, it is useful to note the two larger themes in this passage. Original creation and God's ongoing care for us, His attentiveness to us. Both are there. We will come back to that later.

Now, the Hebrew word for built is *yacad*. The "-cad" part of *yacad* is related to the English verb "to set." Hence, it informs our terms "to set a table," "to set a foundation," or to "let the concrete or glue set." *Yacad* means to build, found, establish, or, as it most commonly appears in the King James Version, to lay a foundation. Most importantly, in its uses in the Old Testament, it carries the idea of beginning, founding.

Please turn over to Exodus 9, the first use of the word *yacad*. This where God is speaking about the seventh plague:

**Exodus 9:18 (GWT)** So, at this time tomorrow I will send the worst hailstorm that has ever happened in Egypt since the beginning [*yacad*] of its history.”

Since Egypt was founded, since it began.

Please, turn to Job 38, for another example. God asks Job:

**Job 38:4 (GWT)** “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?”

The translators rendered *yacad* with the three English words, “laid the foundation,” although the noun foundation is absent in the Hebrew. The sense is that of a beginning. The New Life Version actually renders verse 4, “Where were you when I began building the earth?” That translation catches the essence of *yacad*.

Please turn to Isaiah 28 to see another interesting example *yacad*. Twice is this passage quoted in the New Testament. I’ll read this from the Holman Christian Standard Bible:

**Isaiah 28:16 (HCSB)** Therefore the Lord God said: “Look, I have laid a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation.”

*Yacad* is there in the term “sure foundation,” which is *yacad muwcad* in Hebrew. *Muwcad* is one of the Hebrew nouns for foundation. The “-cad” of *muwcad* is the same “-cad” of *yacad*, “to found” or “to build.” So, the “-cad” appears twice in the phrase. Most translators render *yacad muwcad* as “firm foundation,” or “sure foundation.” But, more literally, and more correctly, the term is best rendered “a founded foundation.” The term “sure foundation” stresses strength, integrity, implying that the foundation is reliable, fit for the job of supporting the building. As such, it is okay.

However, the emphasis of the past participial phrase, “founded foundation” is a foundation that was established by another, founded by someone else. That “someone else,” of course, was God. From the beginning, He established Christ as the foundation. That is an important concept, and one we have already seen, in another form, in Hebrews 10:4-5, where God made, prepared a body for Christ. And sure enough, one translation, the Lexham English Bible, actually does render *yacad muwcad* in that way: “a founded foundation.” This is an insightful and correct translation indeed!

I have covered a lot of ground; let us turn this over again. When do you lay a foundation? Well, in constructing a building, you lay it first. You undoubtedly do some excavation first. But, the foundation is the first part of the structure to be built. You do not build the roof first.

I will not ask you to turn there but in I Kings 6:37, we read,

**I Kings 6:37** In the fourth year the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid, in the month of Ziv.

But, the Contemporary English Version best catches the sense of *yacad*, “Work began on the temple during Ziv, the second month of the year.”

Another example to which you need not turn is in Zechariah 12:1. The *Voice* manages to catch the essential meaning of *yacad* by avoiding terms like, “laid the foundation” of the earth. Instead, it has, “This is the message with which the Eternal burdened His prophet concerning Israel—the Eternal One, who began existence [*yacad*] by stretching out the sky and founding the earth.”

We saw that *katartizo* stresses the maintenance of creation, even the perfecting of it. *Yacad* stresses the initial action of creation, the beginning. This is quite clear from a passage in I Kings 16, to which I will turn. Many of you remember that Joshua, having captured Jericho, cursed the city, prophesying that anyone laying its foundations in the future would do so at the cost of his eldest son. You will find the story at Joshua 6:26. I Kings 16:34, almost as an historical footnote, completes the story. You guessed it. Much later in history, during the reign of the Israelite king, Ahab, a guy called Hiel rebuilt the city.

**I Kings 16:34 (ERV)** When Hiel started work on the city, his oldest son Abiram died.

The term “started work” is the translator’s rendering of *yacad*, indicating initial action, a beginning.

Please turn to Zechariah 8. With that as a background about *yacad*, one of the words translated as *katartizo* in the New Testament, I want to string three passages together, all involving *yacad*. See if you can pick out the common thread running through these passages.

**Zechariah 8:9 (TLB)** The Lord Almighty says, “Get on with the job and finish it! You have been listening long enough! For since you began laying the foundation [*yacad*] of the Temple, the prophets have been telling you about the blessings that await you when it’s finished.

**Zechariah 4:9 (MSG)** After that, the Word of God came to me: “Zerubbabel started [*yacad*] rebuilding this Temple and he will complete it.”

**Isaiah 48:13 (NET)** My hand founded the earth.

In verse 12, God uses the formula which appears also in the book of Revelation:

**Isaiah 48:12 (NET)** “I am present at the very beginning and at the very end.”

Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last. It was the translators of The Message who caught my attention at verse 12, “I got things started and, yes, I will wrap them up.”

All these passages speak of beginning and finishing, start and end. That informs the title of my comments today, “From Start to Finish.” When you look at the meanings of the two verbs together, *yacad* and *katartizo*, what you see is a subtle merism at work, not an obvious one, but a merism for all that: The beginning and the end, with, as is common with merisms, everything included in between. *Yacad*—the work God started at the beginning. *Katartizo*—the work He continues to do and will continue do until the end. The two verbs cover the gamut of God’s work.

I will wrap up cribbing an analogy from Paul. A prevalent figure in that apostle’s writing is that of a race. For example, he tells the members of the churches located around Galatia, recorded at:

**Galatians 5:7 (ISV)** “You were running the race beautifully. Who cut in on you and stopped you from obeying the truth?”

When I was a kid in college, I ran the 440-yard dash. It is a dash, a *sprint* race, for a quarter of a mile. If you have ever attended track meets, you have noticed this about a race: It has a precise, an extraordinarily precise, starting and ending, and in both distance and time. The officials measure the distance of each lane exactly—440 yards, 1,320 feet—in each lane. And time? Well, you better not leave the starting block early. Time is measured exactly, with certified clocks—several of them. There are officials all over the place looking at time and space.

Please turn to Ephesians 1. When did our race, the spiritual race we are in, begin? Paul, provides an answer:

**Ephesians 1:3-4 (ESV)** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world [*kosmos*], that we should be holy and blameless before him.

That was the starting point, when the gun sounded, somewhere before the creation of the kosmos.

Please turn to Philippians 1. There, the same apostle indicates when the race will end. I am reading from the *Worldwide English New Testament*:

**Philippians 1:5-6 (WE)** I thank God for the joy we share in telling the good news from the very first day until now. God began to do a good work in you. And I am sure that he will keep on doing it until he has finished it. He will keep on until the day Jesus Christ comes again.

The race ends at the resurrection, when Christ returns.

God’s work is indeed one of *yacad* and of *katartizo*. He began it, founded it, before we were born. And, He attentively, conscientiously performs an ongoing work of maintenance and restoration, adding value, repairing, preparing, equipping, perfecting the new man, most basically, gifting him with everything he needs to bring Him successfully to the Day of Christ, the day He returns.

I will close with, reading from *The Message*:

**I Corinthians 1:7-9 (MSG)** Just think—you don’t need a thing, you’ve got it all! All God’s gifts are right in front of you as you wait expectantly for our Master Jesus to arrive on the scene for the Finale. And not only that, but God himself is right alongside to keep you steady and on track until things are all wrapped up by Jesus.

God, who got you started in this spiritual adventure, shares with us the life of His Son and our Master Jesus. He will never give up on you. Never forget that.