

Luke 2:21: ESV: And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

“Your Destiny Is Certain in Christ’s Destiny”

INTRODUCTION

If you’re a Star Wars fan, you’re familiar with the word destiny. In the Star Wars saga, there was always someone telling Luke Skywalker that he had some kind of destiny to fulfill. Was his destiny to be a farmer, like his uncle? Or, was his destiny to become a great Jedi Knight and bring balance to the force? Or, was his destiny to rule the empire at his father’s side? His uncle, Obiwan Kenobi and Darth Vader all said, “Luke, this is your destiny.”

The word destiny is defined in three ways:

#1. somebody’s preordained future: the apparently predetermined and inevitable series of events that happen to somebody or something—that’s what everyone was trying to convince Luke of—that he had a preordained future. But, if you notice, it was always the “preordained future” they wanted.

#2. inner realizable purpose of life: the inner purpose of a life that can be discovered and realized—In other words, it’s up to you to find your destiny.

#3. something that predetermines events: a force or agency that predetermines what will happen. This is most likely what we think when we hear the word destiny. Pretty much it’s the same thing as fate—the future is laid out for you and there’s nothing you can do about it.

In reality, though, your destiny in this world isn’t certain. There are many choices and many paths you can take—just ask any college student struggling with what to major in. And

each choice can change one's life—school, marriage, employment, children, retirement—they all impact our purpose, and bring uncertainty to our destiny.

But, because of what God has done for you, on this New Year's Day, we celebrate that

## YOUR DESTINY IS CERTAIN IN CHRIST'S DESTINY.

### I.

Before the fall into sin, Adam and Eve knew their purpose and their destiny. Their purpose was to care for the creation as God's representatives and to be fruitful and multiply—and their destiny was to have everlasting communion with their Creator.

The Fall into sin changed all that. Not only did life change—work would be by the sweat of the brow, childbirth would be painful, and God's perfect creation was cursed—but with Fall into sin came also the loss of that perfect communion with God.

In Star Wars, Luke's destiny wasn't set—it was based on the choices he made, whether to choose to be a farmer, or the light side or the dark side of the Force. But for Adam and Eve, separation from God meant that their destiny was temporal and eternal death.

Since the Fall into sin and the subsequent loss of full communion with God, men and women have searched to find the answers to life's most difficult questions—why am I here?—what is my purpose in life?—what is my destiny?

It's interesting that we ask these questions because mankind's purpose hasn't changed a whole lot—even after the Fall—every person is still created in the image of God and under the command to “love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength”—and to “love your neighbor as yourself.”

Like Luke Skywalker, when it comes to earthly matters our choices often determine our earthly destiny. Yet, no matter what we do, we can't change our spiritual destiny—the spiritual destiny of all of Adam's offspring is the same—temporal death and eternal damnation.

But in the destiny of Jesus Christ—the second Adam, we find the restoration of our purpose and the reestablishment of God's destiny for us—a destiny that's echoed in the words of John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.”

## II.

A hint of Jesus' destiny can be found in His Name—Jesus.

In the United States, we have all but forgotten the concept of naming children symbolically—expressing hope and faith for their future through their names. But there is a people in Ghana called the Ewe Tribe who choose biblical names to give their children at Baptism—names like Love, Hope, Patience, Peace, and so on. Sometimes, if parents can't agree, or if grandparents want some role, the child may receive several Biblical names. Another example is Usain Bolt, whose middle name is St. Leo. Now his parents knew at a young age that Usain was fast, but not at birth. Now, he's certainly lived up to his name, BOLT. But his middle name, St. Leo, is an expression of his Roman Catholic faith, which is evident when he makes the sign of the cross before each race.

In Jesus' case, His name was symbolic of His destiny. The angel said to Joseph, “She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” Jesus is the Greek version of the Hebrew name Yeshua—Joshua in English. The Name Jesus means, “Yahweh is salvation” or “Yahweh saves.” And on the day of His circumcision, Luke records in

our very brief Gospel reading that Joseph obeyed the angel and gave the child of Mary the name Jesus.

In His name, we see what God's destiny was for His Son—to save His people from their sins. The path was laid out for Jesus—and this path He followed faithfully. He came to save His people from their sins. He came to take our destiny of sin and death and damnation to the cross that He might restore God's destiny of grace for us—a destiny that includes the forgiveness of sins, life and everlasting communion with our Heavenly Father.

Also, because of Christ Jesus, we are blessed to know our purpose in life as we see God's purpose fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus loved His Father with all of His heart, mind and soul and strength, and He laid down His life for His neighbor—even for those who hated Him. We've all been created for that purpose—to love and serve God, and to use the gifts and blessings God has given each of us to love and serve our neighbor.

Because of sin, this would be an impossible task, but all who are in Christ—who bear the name Jesus—are empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill God's purpose of love—to love Him and to seek the good for our neighbor. And the very best good we can do for our neighbor is to give him or her the Name that is above all names, the name by which we are saved—Jesus Christ!

### III. In Christ.

This restoration of your purpose and reestablishment of your destiny is possible because you are a New Creation in Christ Jesus. “In Christ Jesus” is one of St. Paul's favorite phrases in his Epistles—it's a reminder to all who've been baptized that they have been baptized into the saving name of Jesus.

In Baptism, God affirms that you are His own and He guarantees a future for you in His Son, who said: “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.” In the waters of Baptism, the Holy Spirit drowns your destiny of eternal death and damnation and gives you a new destiny of life in Christ.

Of course, it’s tempting for you and me, to wonder if life would be better if we took a different path. It isn’t easy to be an authentic Christian in this culture. You may wonder if you’re missing out on the best part of life by not traveling those contrived and colorful side roads that your friends enjoy. After all, a life freed from the constraints of God’s Law seems to be a lot more fun than a life of following Jesus. You have all that money and time for yourself—there’s no real need to love your neighbor—unless it benefits you—no church to support or attend—no pesky pastor telling you you’re a sinner.

However, there’s something deceptive about these other roads. like those billboards around town that promise fulfillment if you follow them to the casinos, the video game parlors, or the strip clubs. Most of us have lived long enough to know that such things are not fulfilling—and their destiny is only death, for they don’t give life, they only take life. I watch with sadness as young people become lost in depression and unhappiness because they’ve made the pursuit of sexual pleasure their destiny. They have been deceived into thinking that that’s the only way to enjoy a life that’s grim and short. But instead of finding pleasure and happiness at the end of the rainbow, they find only heartache and heartbreak, disease and dissatisfaction, loneliness and regret.

Pursuing the destiny God gave you at Baptism will alone set you on the path to true happiness, the path whose destiny is life and salvation, because it’s the path you walk with Jesus.

There's a famous story about Martin Luther and Baptism. He claimed that when he was despairing, and seemed to be overwhelmed with the challenges of the emperor, the pope, the peasants' rebellion, and so on, he would write in Latin in the dust on the table, "I am baptized." It was his reminder that no matter what the future might bring, his eternal destiny as baptized child of God was certain!

Those words, "I am baptized," point to one thing—your new life in Jesus Christ. You are baptized into the one Name above all other names. In Jesus you are a new Creation. Your destiny is certain.

#### CONCLUSION

Last night there was a whole lot of celebrating as we rang in a New Year. And today, many of us may be feeling the effects of too much celebrating—a reminder that the world's paths are not paths that lead to happiness and fulfillment.

But these words, "I am baptized into the Name of Jesus," are words of true celebration. In Christ, your sinful past is washed away in a flood of God's grace and your future life with God is certain.

Does that mean that tomorrow will be problem-free? No, of course not. One particular tomorrow brought the cross for Jesus! And we ourselves will have our own crosses to bear. But you bear them knowing the outcome, you bear them knowing that your destiny as a forgiven people is eternal life with Christ!

In His Name. Amen.