

What sort of synopsis of the gospel would we devise to function as an “evangelistic tool” if we were to understand the gospel as it is outlined in Ephesians 1:3–12? I have made an attempt to devise just such an “evangelistic tool” below.

Notice how strikingly different it is from the evangelistic tools that are popular and in use in Evangelical culture today (notably, the “Bridge Diagram” and the “Four Spiritual Laws”).

What Will You Do With Jesus?

A Synopsis of the Biblical Gospel and the Question It Poses

1. You and I are part of a reality that has been authored by a person outside of this reality. His purpose in authoring this reality was to create something apart from him that reflects his own awesome character and nature. We typically call this author “God.”
2. This reality that God has authored has the nature of a story. And the purpose of the story is to embody and reflect within it, among other things, the profound depths of his (the author’s) mercy, kindness, and love.
3. In this story, each and every human being (like ourselves) finds himself to be a rebellious, ungrateful creation of this Author. We are all inherently indifferent to him and to everything he values, does, and promises. Human beings do not care to know God and they do not seek after the things that God deems good. Especially, they do not desire to be the kind of person that God wants them to be, nor to behave as he wants them to behave.
4. Within the context of this story (created reality), the destiny that each and every human being deserves is destruction—not to mention punishment for all the things that he has done that are in conflict with what is right and good and pleasing to God. Consequently, unless someone or something intervenes to rescue him from such a fate, punishment and destruction is the inevitable fate of every human being.
5. Before the story (created reality) had even begun, the Author of created reality had already determined which of us sinful and bad individuals were going to continue on to our inevitable destruction for being bad, and which of us—out of the Author’s choice to be merciful—were going to be rescued from the punishment and destruction that was our due.
6. Before the story (created reality) had even begun, the Author had devised a plan to appoint a man to represent himself within the story. Messiah Jesus was that man. God’s plan for rescuing from destruction whichever individuals he had pre-selected for such rescue involved his delegating authority to the Messiah, Jesus, to grant mercy and life to whichever individuals he wanted. Whomever the Messiah chose as one of his own, such a one would not receive punishment and destruction. Rather, he would receive forgiveness for his sins and everlasting life in an eternal age that the Author has promised to create beyond this age.
7. In God’s plan, Jesus’ authority to grant forgiveness and life to whomever he wanted was connected to an important act of obedience with which God had tasked him. Namely, in obedience to God—and as an act of love toward mankind—Jesus voluntarily subjected himself to a tortuous and unjust death on a Roman cross. He understood that, by doing so, he was allowing God to provide a vivid demonstration of the hostility and wrath that was due to any individual who rebelled against him and was indifferent to what was important to him. By submitting to this representation of God’s wrath against his own body, Jesus was allowing God to portray what every human being deserves for his evil rejection of God and God’s values. It is precisely because of Jesus’ voluntary submission to this part of God’s purpose—that is, precisely because of this act of heroic obedience and remarkable love—that God, the Author, will grant authority to Jesus to decide who is to receive mercy. To whomever Jesus

wants, the Author will forgive their evil and will rescue them from the condemnation and death that awaits the rest of mankind—for, by his obedience to death on the cross, Jesus qualified himself to have such authority.

8. A further part of the Author's pre-established plan was that there would be an important correlation between those whom Jesus chooses for himself and those who make a personal, existential decision to be followers of Jesus. Anyone who makes an existential choice to be a disciple of Jesus belongs to Jesus and will be chosen by him to receive forgiveness and eternal life. Any human being who believes that Jesus is the Messiah sent by God and who decides to follow him as his disciple—such an individual has had that very belief and choice created within his own mind and will by the Author of reality, and it signals the fact that that individual belongs to Jesus and has been chosen from before the very beginning of the story to be one of those who will receive the Author's mercy.

- So, here is the all-important question that you need to answer for yourself: ***Which sort of individual are you?*** Are you one whom Jesus is choosing for himself and who will be rescued from punishment and condemnation? Or, are you one whom Jesus is not choosing for himself and who will continue on to punishment and destruction?

You can assure yourself that you are the former—one who will be rescued from punishment and destruction—by making a bona fide commitment to follow Jesus as his disciple. Is that something you choose to do? I pray to God that he will cause you to do so. *If you choose to follow Jesus, you demonstrate that you are among those few who were chosen before the beginning of time to be rescued from destruction and to live on into the eternal age to come.*