

## Eltham Message Church

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# Predestination

## **Ephesians 1**

<sup>1</sup>Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

<sup>2</sup>Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>3</sup>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

<sup>4</sup>**According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

<sup>5</sup>Having **predestinated** us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

## **Predestination means that destiny (or destination) is pre set, or predetermined.**

In the first 12 verses of this letter to the church in Ephesus the apostle Paul, as part of his introduction, goes straight into deep things. The Ephesus church was mature. It could take deep teachings unlike the Corinthian church that squabbled and allowed serious sin to stay in the church. In verses 4 & 5 Paul basically says that God chose them before the foundation of the world to be a part of God's plan of bringing all things together in Christ.

Put it this way, Paul is saying that before there was ever a universe, before the sun shone or the earth spun on its axis, God planned that there would be specific people who would fulfil His plan. But that plan included good things for those people. The plan was to make a people perfect through faith in the death of Jesus on the cross. Christ's death would create a church, and from that church Christ

would call a Bride. Those true Bride believers would become one with Jesus Christ. They are the New Jerusalem, they are the body of Christ and He is their head.

So, before Genesis 1 v1 our destiny was pre set, pre-ordained, predestined to become God's children.

Is this possible?

## **Pharaoh was raised to refuse Moses**

God says (Exodus 9 v13-16) that He raised up this Pharaoh for the express purpose of revealing His power. God had pre destined this man to be Pharaoh specifically so that He could harden his heart. And with that God hardened heart he refused to let the Children of Israel go. Because of that refusal God could reveal His power by bringing many plagues on Egypt. This man was predestined to be Pharaoh. He was predestined to refuse God's prophet, God made sure of that by hardening Pharaoh's heart. He was predestined to be the reason Egypt suffered those plagues.

Jeremiah was predestined to be a prophet before he was conceived in his mother's womb. (Jeremiah 1 v4-5)

There was a blind man healed by Jesus. The disciples were convinced that the only reason a man could be blind was if he, or his parents had sinned. His blindness was seen as the result of sin. They asked Jesus, who had done wrong.

Jesus responded that neither the man nor had his parents had sinned; he was that way to show God's glory! (John 9 v1-3) In other words that man was blind so that one day Jesus could walk by and heal him. He was blind so that God's plan of revealing His power could be carried out. It was all premeditated, all pre-planned, all predestined.

## **Implications of Predestination**

Having everything predestined means that there is nothing anyone can do about the final result of one's life. God's plan will work out no matter what we do, at least that is the extreme view. This became standard doctrine after Luther had passed away. This doctrine is called Calvinism.

## **Calvinism**

The "Calvinistic" view of predestination is based on the concept that everything is pre-planned, pre set, and that no changes can be made. And it is easy to see why that view is held from the above scriptures.

Calvinists believe that everyone's fate, everyone's life, has been ordained by God. There can be no changes. The outcome of all this is that there is no point in trying to convert people because their fate is already decided. Those that are predestined to hell, go there; those predestined to believe and go to heaven will go there.

If this doctrine is taken to its logical conclusion then there is no need for missionary work, no need to evangelise, no need to do anything except keep oneself safe and pure.

This doctrine was very strong in and after the reformation in the early 1500s through to the mid or late 1700s.

## **The Armenian Doctrine**

Then God sent an opposite view through John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church. It is called the Armenian doctrine

### **Armenian Doctrine**

The Armenian doctrine is based on John 3 v16 <sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

What this is saying is that whoever believes in Jesus Christ will not perish but will have everlasting life. In other words people can choose their destiny, it is not pre-determined at all. Jesus called his disciples but some said no, some wanted to do a trade.

The Rich Young Ruler in Mark 10 v17-22 asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus went over the commandments which the young man acknowledged he had kept from his youth up. And Jesus loved him, and said that he only lacked one thing. He was to go and sell what he had and give to the poor. The young man couldn't face that and he turned away. The point is, the young man had the opportunity but he turned it down of his own free will. There is nothing there that indicates that the rich young ruler had no choice. Rather the reverse.

Luke 9 v57-62 tells how two men came offering to follow Jesus but one wanted to bury his father first the other wanted to say goodbye to his family. Jesus rebuked them both as being unworthy. If the hand is put to the plough then there is no looking back.

At the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, Peter, newly filled with the Holy Ghost, preached the first ever Christian sermon. He convicted 3000 people who wanted to be made right with God. Again it seems quite clear that the people simply made a choice.

JOEL 2:32 *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.*

MATTHEW 12:50 *For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*

MATTHEW 16:24 ¶ *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

25 *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.*

And the most famous quote of all:

JOHN 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

So as well as predestination we have free will, a choice we can all make

## **Contradiction**

At first glance these two concepts, predestination of Ephesians 1 and the free will choice of John 3 v16 seem to be contradictory.

## **Tares & Wheat: Matthew 13 v24-30 & 36-43**

Jesus told the parable of the Tares and the Wheat. A farmer had sown wheat in his field but an enemy came at night and sowed tares.

Tares look very much like wheat. They grow at the same rate but at harvest time they stand tall and straight while wheat bows with the heavy weight of new life in its head. The seed of wheat, of course, makes flour for bread, whereas tare seed is poisonous, it gives hallucinations and brings death.

The end of both tares and wheat is predestined. The Farmer tells his men to let both grow together but at harvest time the tares are to be gathered into bundles and the wheat gathered into the barn. So, before either comes to harvest time each type of plant has its destination already determined, each has a predestined future.

Jesus explains the parable; the field is the world, God is the farmer, the enemy is the devil, the tares are the children of the devil, and the wheat are the children of God.

It almost seems unfair, the tares can't help but be tares, and tares are going to burn!

But we reckon without God.

There are people truly of God but there is also a mixture.

Genesis 6 v1-4 The sons of God saw the daughters of men and married them.

There are two lines; the sons of God came from Seth's children. Seth was the replacement son for Abel, who Cain slew. Cain was a liar and a murderer, not one of God's sons. Cain's line is the line of men, and they produced good looking daughters. The idea was for Seth's line to stay pure. But the good looking women that Cain's line produced tempted Seth's line and they intermarried. Not only did this cross breeding produce some incredibly powerful people but it also brought in more evil. God decided to flood the world.

After the flood the only people who pretty well stayed pure were Abraham's people, the Hebrews. Abraham was very careful who was to be Isaac's wife, and Jacob too married within the family when he returned to Laban, his mother's brother and married two of his daughters, Leah and Rachel.

This staying within the family continued until Israel was captured by the Assyrians and Judah by the Babylonians. Some tribes intermarried with locals others stayed pure. The intermarried people were termed Samaritans, the pure were called Jews. All other people are termed Gentiles.

Who is who? Who hasn't a little bit of tare, a bit of gentile in them?

We have all fallen short of the glory of God, we are all in a less than perfect state. None of us are pure bred sons or daughters of God

So God sent His Son Jesus Christ to pay the price to redeem all. It isn't God's will that any should perish but most people still have free will to say no if they want. The rich young ruler that Jesus loved had just about everything and Jesus loved him. But he couldn't let go of his riches. He rejected the call. The next time we see him is in the story of the rich young ruler and Lazarus where both die and he goes to a very real place of torment.

The point?

The rich young ruler had free will. Jesus Himself called the rich young ruler, drew him to Himself, loved him, but the richer young ruler had the free will to say no. And he did.

So if there is free choice how can there be a place for predestination?

There is only one possible solution. There can be a change from being a tare to becoming wheat.

For those of us with tare tendencies the death of Jesus on the cross means that we can reject our tare life and be born again with a wheat life. And once we have that, then we know we have changed our pre determined destination.

Our destination changed, not because predestination has failed, but because we have changed from a tare to wheat. And that change occurred because we made a choice to love and follow Christ.

### **Revelation 13 v4-8**

This section is all about the rise of evil against God's people and it describes how the world will be deceived. But the key verse is the last one, verse 8. All will worship (that is accept and respect the authority of) the beast, except those people whose names were written in the book of life.

So there is a number of people who had their names written in a book. There is a number of people who are already listed will not respect or accept the authority of the beast. And the book is owned by whom? The Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world!

And that Lamb is Jesus Christ. Jesus was predestined to be killed right at the beginning of the world's creation.

But each of us has a choice and because God knows all things He knows what we will choose. He knows that we will love Him. And because He knows what we, of our own free will are going to do He makes a way back to Himself.

*Malachi 1 v1* Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, 3 And I hated Esau,

Romans 9 v10 And not only *this*; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, *even* by our father Isaac; <sup>11</sup> (For *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) <sup>12</sup> It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. <sup>13</sup> As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

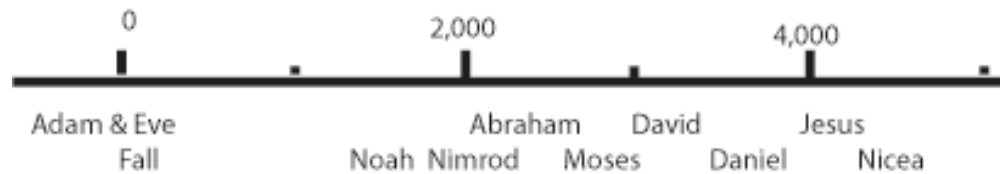
Genesis 25 v20-23 The elder, Esau shall serve the younger, Jacob. This was before they were born. Their destiny was already set.

But when the older came into the camp tired he agreed to accept some soup, some

broth, in exchange for his birthright. And God knew that Esau would despise his birthright so He hated him before he was born.

So there is a predestined life for the followers of Christ, but we had free will to make that decision. It's just that God knew what we would choose, and so he set a destiny there, before we were born, so we have a home to go to.

God knows because He is omnipresent. We are stuck in time. We can only go one way, forward, moment by moment. But God is eternal, He is outside of time and in all time. He can view time as a line of events and look down on them. Below is a time line with some key peoples lives located below the line. Imagine that those people or events were living along that line. As God you could touch that line at any point, see what was happening. You would know how people would turn out because you had seen them, yet they had free will at the time they made their decisions.



This is of course a very crude illustration but it can help us to recognise that God is not restricted by time. Our logic of what God can and cannot do must include the fact that God is eternal and in all places at all times. He is omnipresent.

Hence Pater's opening lines of his first letter:

I PETER 1:1

1 ¶ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

Peter is saying that the elect are those who through the foreknowledge of God will be sanctified and sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ.

But probably a better known confirmation of predestination by foreknowledge comes from the often misread and misunderstood verse of Romans 8. People quote it as saying that "All things work together for good to them that love God." They leave out the next bit. "To them who are the called." Note "the" called. It is not just

those who are called, but those that are THE called ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE. And then Romans goes on to say, for whom He did foreknow He predestine to be changed, to be conformed to Christ.

ROMANS 8:28

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

29 ¶ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

31 ¶ What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

If we are indeed part of the called then we have an absolute assurance of our place in Christ, because He foreknew what that we would love Him so He did all that was necessary for us to become a part of Him.

And if He has done that then we can assured of eternity with Him.

The beast of Revelation, his mark and his number are a mystery to most, and all will be deceived and wonder at what has really been going on except those whose names were written in the book of life, when? Before the foundation of the world.

REVELATION 17:8

8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they beheld the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

So there is a people who will know the truth, and those peoples names were written in the book of life, that book that the slain Lamb of God redeemed in Revelation chapter 5.

Predestination by foreknowledge is a wonderful revelation.

God bless you.

Richard Oliver