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DIVINE ELECTION

The election of Israel originated in God's sovereign choice, expressed His covenantal love, and served the goal of redemptive history culminating in Jesus Christ.

The election of the Messiah is a fourth type of election. Isaiah referred to the servant of the Lord as "my chosen one" (42:1 Matthew 12:18). Of the Synoptic only Luke refers to Jesus as the Chosen One (9:35; 23:35). Peter echoes another Isaiah reference (28:16) in 1 Peter 1:20 and 2:4, 6. These references indicate the unique mediator-ship office of Christ and the Father's pleasure in Him.

The election to salvation, with which the rest of this article is concerned, the most common NT reference to election is God's eternal election of certain persons to salvation in Jesus Christ. The subject is dealt with comprehensively in Ephesians 1:3-11 and Romans 8:28-11:36. The whole doctrine of election is summarized in Ephesians chapter one.

Election unto salvation is then defined as the unchangeable purpose of God before the foundation of the world, out of the whole human race, which had fallen by its own fault out of its original integrity into sin and ruin.

God has, according to the good pleasure of His will, out of mere grace, chosen in Christ to salvation a certain number of specific men, neither better nor more worthy than other, but with them involved in a common misery (1.7).

God out of His most free, most just, blameless, and unchangeable good pleasure has decreed to leave in the common misery into which they have by their own fault plunged themselves, and not to give them saving faith and the grace of conversion and "finally to condemn and punish them eternally" NOT for their sins (1.15) but for rejecting His plan of grace. Predestination thus includes election and reprobation, and reprobation involves both a sovereign passing by (preterit ion) and a just condemnation.

PRINCIPLES OF ELECTION

One: Election is a sovereign, eternal decree of God. The elect have been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will (Ephesians 1:11). God chose us in Christ "before the creation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4). God's sovereign decree is not arbitrary; "in love He predestined us... in accordance with His pleasure and will (Ephesians 1:5; Romans 8:29).

Two: The presupposition of God's eternal decree of election is that the human race is fallen; election involves God's gracious rescue plan. It is not based on human works or God's foreknowledge of works (Romans 9:11). The elect are chosen to be holy and blameless in

His sight"; they are adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 1:4-7). Hence election leads to "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

The same perspective is evident in Romans, for those whom "God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son" (8:29). The presupposition is that they are fallen, and hence God's predestination includes calling, justification, and glorification. This presupposition, that the fallen race is the object of predestination.

Three. Election is "election in Christ"; election involves rescue from sin and guilt and receiving the gracious gifts of salvation. Election in Christ is evident in the words already quoted from Ephesians 1:4-5, 11, and Romans 8:29. Christ is not merely a subsequent means to effectuate a decree of election; election is in Christ and through Christ.

God the Father decreed to give to Christ those who were to be saved, and effectually to call and draw them into His fellowship through His word and Spirit" (I.7). Thus God's election is in Christ, and Christ is both the foundation of election and the foundation of salvation.

Four. Election involves both the elect's salvation and the means to that end. This is already evident in the repeated references to election in Christ, but it is made even more specific. God chose the elect to be holy and blameless in His sight to be adopted as His sons.

"Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him."
[Ephesians 1:4-9]

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified [Romans 8:29-39].

God chose the elect "to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:13). Hence the preaching of the Gospel is indispensable in effecting God's election (Romans 10:14-17; Acts 18:9-11). The salvation of the elect has its decretive origin before time, is realized through means in history, and culminates in eternal glorification.

God decreed to give them true faith in Him, to justify them, to sanctify them, and, after having powerfully kept them in the fellowship of His Son, finally to glorify them, for the demonstration of His mercy and the praise of the riches of His glorious grace" (I.7). This feature of election negates the objection that if one is elect, one will be saved regardless of whether or not one believes. It also excludes the objection that election leads to a libertine spirit; unbelief and careless living are inconsistent with the scriptural doctrine of election.

Five. Election is individual, personal, specific, and particular. Ephesians refers repeatedly to "us" and "we" in connection with election (1:4-5, 12). In Romans, Paul refers to "those" whom God foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and glorified (8:29-30). Romans 9 indicate that personal election unto salvation was operative within the election of Israel. Paul states that "not all who are descended from Israel are Israel" (9:6, 8) and he shows that "God's purpose in election" distinguished between Isaac and Ishmael, between Jacob

and Esau (9:7, 11-13). This is also the implication of the expressions in John 6:37-40; 10:14-16, 26-29; 17:2, 6, 9, and 24. Particularly, personal election leads to the believer's comfort and does not promote carelessness or false confidence.

Six. The ultimate goal of election is the glory and praise of God. Election to salvation involves personal privilege, blessing, security, and comfort for the elect. But Scripture makes clear that it is "to the praise of His glorious grace" that everything leads (Ephesians 1:6).

The believers have been chosen and predestined "in order that *they* might be for the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:12). God's goal is "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (Ephesians 1:10; I Peter 1:1; 2:9; Matthew 13:27-30; 24:31).