

# Biblical Predestination

***The Protestant Reformation brought forward many Novel Interpretations. None had more Severe and Disruptive effect on Evangelical Theology than the Commonly Taught Understanding of the subject of Predestination!***

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Giant religious personalities who figured heavily in the Reformation of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, laid a foundational base for understanding that remains enduring to the present day. The concepts around which their theology was framed led to the establishment of involved doctrines, even providing a theological foundation for entire denominations.

While the general intent of the matter of certain individuals being “predestined” as stated in the New Testament was positive, it is understood and is represented by modern theologies, especially those known as being “Calvinistic”, as decidedly **severe**, posing seemingly difficult obstacles to those conscious of their personal faults. Not the least of which is the contrasting position of those **not** “predestined” for salvation being hopelessly lost, no matter how much desire to be “saved” they may possess and how much anxiety and effort they put forth in pursuit of it.

The places that mention predestination are actually rather few in number. It’s from these that the doctrine as we know it was formed. We will consider those Scriptures shortly.

## **Irreversibly Lost?**

The Doctrine of Predestination is built upon the foundational premise that predestination involves whether or not a person is destined to be saved. It is commonly held that “some are destined to be called, while others are not”! The net effect of this premise is that there is a contingent of people, (and we might logically observe that, if true, it represents the vast majority) who just are not ever to be called to salvation and in reality have no possible chance to ever really become ‘saved’.

This premise is closely interlocked with the position of those who hold to the teaching that this

is the **ONLY** day of salvation. In fact, it **requires** that view. If there is another day of salvation, then the foundation of what’s known as the Predestination Doctrine is seriously undermined, because we can’t have the final word on all individuals until the redemption process has run its full course!

The doctrine as it came to be understood in the Reformation era was heavily influenced by prior theologies, those largely put forth by the Catholic Church, developed within the Dark Ages. We can see much of what was believed in those years reflected in religious fiction such as Dante Alighieri’s “*Divine Comedy*”. We gain from that work such references as Dante’s Inferno, a concept of an ever-burning Hell, common in the minds of a great number of religious peoples even prior to Dante’s time. So, it’s from that theological swamp of misconception that worshippers today have formed a concept of what Predestination involves as it regards all “the rest”, the un-predestined.

The point above is that Predestination in the minds of people is to a great extent what we bring into it from past pre-conceptions. The prevailing concept is that it means some are predestined to be saved while others are not. Those who are **not** are destined to Hell no matter what their desire or what effort they put forth in attempts to attain salvation. In other words, the Predestination Doctrine presents a contrast between being saved or being lost, with there being no personal choice in the matter.

But, in order to fully understand the matter. We must have good answers to the questions: Is there but one day of Salvation? And, is the concept of an ever-burning Hell, where those consigned there are tortured in merciless agony, Biblically valid?

Worthy of thoughtful consideration also is the concept of the nature of God this particular

predestination idea poses. Would a loving and Just God be so uncaring and unmerciful toward what obviously is the vast majority of humanity? Most thoughtful people have struggled with the question.

Let's consider the basic premises of John Calvin's Predestination Theology for a moment. Much of what's taught in a number of main-stream religions carries a certain measure of this understanding embedded within.

### Predestination According to Calvin

*Gleaned from the internet*

**John Calvin** was an influential French theologian and pastor during the Protestant Reformation. He was a principal figure in the development of the system of Christian theology later called Calvinism. Originally trained as a humanist lawyer, he broke from the Roman Catholic Church around 1530. Calvin's writing and preachings provided the seeds for the branch of theology that bears his name. The Reformed, Congregational, and Presbyterian churches, which look to Calvin as the chief expositor of their beliefs, have spread throughout the world.

"According to John Calvin, predestination is **God's unchangeable decree from before the creation of the world** that he would freely save some people (the elect), foreordaining them to eternal life, while the others (the reprobate) would be **"barred from access to salvation"** and sentenced to "eternal death..."

"Calvin described the **basis of predestination** in several ways. In general he affirmed that there is no basis for election outside of God. Referring to **Eph. 1:9**, Calvin noted that God purposed election "in Himself," basing his decree of predestination on "nothing outside Himself." Calvin attributed the salvation of the elect to God's free decision to favor them. He variously described this as God's "mere generosity," His "freely given mercy," and the "good pleasure of His will; (cf. **Eph. 1:5**)." Moreover, Calvin based the damnation of the reprobate solely in God's decision ..."

"Since God's reasons for predestination are wholly internal to His being, they are opaque to humanity. Ultimately, then, the basis of God's predestination is mysterious and "utterly incomprehensible" to people. This mystery points to one of God's purposes in predestination, to inspire wonder and reverence in believers. The things hidden in God are not to be understood by people, but rather revered in their "wonderful depth..."

"Despite the mysterious basis of predestination, it is possible for the elect to be certain of their status as children of God. The first and seemingly most important indicator of election is what Calvin referred to as "the calling of God." His use of this term seems to refer to a subjective inward certainty that God has chosen a person for salvation."

### Pertinent Scriptures

From an *Englishman's Greek Concordance*<sup>1</sup> we find the translated word "predestinate" (or predestinated) to have several other translations. Using a *Strong's Concordance*, it might not be so obvious. The Greek word is **proorao / proorizo**, *Strong's* #4308 / 4309, which is translated in a number of ways. In each of the below verses, the word in question is shown in bold type.

**Ac. 2:25** *For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:*

**Ac. 21:29** *(For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)*

**Ac. 4:28** *For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.*

**Rom. 8:29 – 30** *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.*

**1 Cor. 2:7** *But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:*

**Eph. 1:5** *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*

**Eph. 1:11** *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:*

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<sup>1</sup> The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament, Zondervan Edition, 1971

It is from these few mentions that the Predestination teaching was developed, a teaching that has shaped a great deal of Christian theology. Not only does it influence our perceptions of the process of salvation, but also shapes our perceptions of God and His mercy, or seeming lack thereof.

The major point of this teaching (some call it a doctrine) is that certain individuals were known or chosen in advance by God for salvation, even long before their birth, while the rest (obviously the vast majority) have **no chance whatsoever!** God has (supposedly) decreed this and no-one can change His pre-set determination in any way!

### What IS Predestination Really?

From the above verses we can discern a little more than Predestinationists would admit. First, there IS a foreknowledge on God's part, but it is not a rigidly unalterable consignment to damnation of the great majority. Biblical pre-destination is NOT exclusionary, though it's a major component in their line of reasoning. Second, of those "predestined", their destiny is to be conformed to the image of His Son, as Romans 8:29-30 explains. It is **WHAT** we will become that is pre-determined, not so much **WHO** will be called. Ephesians 1:5 conveys some of the same idea. Our destiny is to become Spirit-born sons in the greater Family of God. In other words, God has fully thought out His Plan and Purpose for humanity in advance.

Where Predestinationists have missed the point is in their failure to understand that there are two "days of salvation". And in missing that detail, they are forced to see the vast majority consigned to never being given any opportunity for salvation. We see this view as being a result of their firm belief that "this is the ONLY day of salvation".

When we realize that, NO, there is **more than one** day of salvation, the whole picture of predestination and what it represents changes.

Their idea is that, since this is the **ONLY** day of salvation, anyone not saved in this age, during this lifetime, is "destined" to automatic condemnation, consigned to an ever-burning hell! This premise gives some believers fits of anxiety, both for their loved ones but even more for infants and young children who die young, too young to be able to

comprehend repentance, let alone be baptized and become truly converted. There are a number of unique teachings developed by various denominations to address this obvious "problem".

### What Does God Foreknow?

Much of what is believed on this subject is based on what God has foreknowledge OF. Perhaps we should back-up a little and realize that it is in fact God who "calls" individuals. It is a fact that no man CAN come to His Son for conversion without being "called" and that calling is of and by the Father's pre-determination. John 6:44 tells us that no man can come except the Father draws him! <sup>2</sup> Most of Christianity generally teaches that we're on a "whosoever wills" basis, except where the Predestination Doctrine confounds that premise. Under that teaching, not all can come or exhibit even the will to come! A Calvinists view is that God has already unalterably consigned them to their fate, and nothing they might do can change it.

Effectively, the typical Predestination Doctrine denies the fact that God has given all individuals free moral agency, alleging mankind has no choice where their salvation is concerned. Yet, so many scriptures present choices and encourage mankind to make the right choice. What is repentance and how does it work if choices are not involved?

It was mentioned earlier that God can and does know certain things in advance. There IS such a thing as predestination, but it is not the severe exclusion from any opportunity for salvation that Calvinistic teachings allege. What God knows is **WHO** can make it **IF** called. He also knows who would likely **NOT** make it if they were called in this lifetime. Those who **CAN** successfully follow through the process of salvation are those whom God the Father opts to call now. That does not preclude their success. As many scriptures explain, <sup>3</sup> those called in this or any age **can fail** and many do fail in their quest. It's a matter of their personal choices and determination. Salvation is not a foregone conclusion based solely on ones calling.

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<sup>2</sup> This is stated in the context of the spring Holy Day season, while the 'whosoever wills' statement is mentioned in the context of the fall Holy Day season. My article on "*Whosoever Wills May Come*" addresses this seeming contradiction.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 6:4-8; 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:19; Hebrews 10:27.

## Where the Premise Fails.

Where is the common Predestination Doctrine wrong? It's faulty due to being based on two significant errors. First, the teaching that this is the **ONLY** day of salvation, and second, overlooking the fact that **ALL ARE** destined to be called. It's a matter of **WHEN**. Predestination cannot be that some are to be called while others never will be, because **ALL** are destined to be called. It's a matter of **WHEN** they are to be called!

Yes, there **IS** to be a "whosoever wills" opportunity period,<sup>4</sup> when **ANY** who wish may receive God's Spirit and become converted, but **that is not now**. It will exist in the Millennial Age and beyond. Those not destined, (by the grace of God) to be called **now** will have their opportunity **LATER!** (with most churches, there is no "later".) But, there **IS!** That is what the subject of the resurrections from the dead<sup>5</sup> brings into the picture. Religionists for the most part fails to understand or teach the Truth on this matter. There **IS** a time when all nations will be called. All of humanity will be invited to "come" (Rev. 22:17). There is a resurrection where the "books" (biblos) will be "opened to them"!<sup>6</sup> They are not opened to them presently. The world in general just cannot understand the Bible! And notice, it is the Spirit and the Bride which issues this open invitation. This positively places the timeframe after the first resurrection, when Christ's Bride is alive in Spirit form, co-laboring with Christ to effect the open opportunity for world salvation, which is the theme of the Feast of Tabernacles. (See Zechariah 14:16-21.) (With Satan removed from society. (Rev. 20))

## A Post-Destined Contingent?

The key for us to understand is that pre-destination involves being chosen for a calling prior to the rest of humanity. Destined to be called early is another way of wording it. Based on God's awareness of a person's ability and personal dispositions, He calls some now, but the rest later. Those who couldn't make it, for whatever reason, will be called **later**. (This is called "mercy".<sup>7</sup>) We could call them the **post-destined** as opposed to the **pre-destined**.

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<sup>4</sup> John 7:37-38; Rev. 22:17

<sup>5</sup> Revelation 20:5; Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:24-30.

<sup>6</sup> Revelation 20:12

<sup>7</sup> Romans 11:32, etc.

There are **TWO** harvests of humanity. What some theologians (and scripture) refer to as "the early and latter rains".<sup>8</sup> There is a smaller (early season) harvest which will be reaped at Christ's Second Coming, but a much greater harvest when He, the Son of Man, seated on the White Cloud, reaps the Earth's righteous harvest once it is "fully ripened" as we read in Revelation chapter 14. This is what religionists for the most part do not understand, and they don't understand because they have rejected the essential teachings of the resurrections and what is revealed in the Biblical Holy Days of God.

## Apparent Incongruities?!

Let's consider the subliminal effects of Calvin's Predestination Theology for a moment.

It makes God out to be insensitive to the vast majority, consigning them to eternal damnation.

It undermines the whole basis of Judgment. Why subject the unconverted to a condemned Judgment if they were never afforded any choice?

It disregards God's basic intent, (being not willing that any should perish). How could He say that?


It presents God as unfathomably mysterious, not ever revealing His purpose to mankind, where He claims to do the opposite. (John 15:15)

This theology fails to realize that there are two harvests periods in the redemption of humanity.

It fails to factor-in the reasons for the resurrections.

But most importantly, the common predestination teaching is wrong because **ALL** are destined to be called (It's a matter of when! ).

## What We Haven't Considered

Of those of us who **are** called in this age, those predestined to be among God's firstfruits, it is still not a foregone conclusion that we will be successful. While our opportunity period is opened, it is still required that we make the right choices, to overcome sin in our lives, to receive and employ God's Holy Spirit as we pursue the perfection called for in such places as Hebrews 6. While we may not fathom the reasons for our being selected now, we must follow through, as there is no second chance! 

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<sup>8</sup> James 5:7; Deuteronomy 11:14.