

November 2013

Frank W. Nelte

## **THE TRUTH ABOUT PREDESTINATION**

A number of the religions of this world have a strong belief in some form of predestination, that all people supposedly have a foreordained fate, a predetermined eternal destiny. According to this teaching God has decided in advance who will be given salvation and who will not be given salvation. This idea also underlies the common phrase "que sera, sera", what will be, will be. An extension of this idea is the "once saved, always saved" teaching. However, this whole teaching of predestination is totally unbiblical!

The main effect of this false teaching is that it is an extremely powerful de-motivator! After all, if the outcome of our lives has been decided in advance, no matter what we do, then why should we bother to work hard and endure tests and trials and hardships? Nothing you do can supposedly change the predetermined outcome, so why bother to do anything that takes effort?

To deal with this false teaching, Mr. Herbert Armstrong wrote a booklet almost 60 years ago now, entitled "Predestination: Does the Bible Teach It?". Most of that booklet was devoted to explaining the first and the second resurrection, in an attempt to show that the vast majority of all who have lived and died were emphatically not predestined to be lost, because they will come up in the second resurrection. Only towards the end of that booklet did Mr. Armstrong then explain what the Bible actually teaches about predestination. It is time that we examined this subject once again.

### **A FALSE TEACHING BUILT ON MISTRANSLATIONS**

Many of the major false ideas about what the Bible teaches are based on mistranslations. God tells us that Satan has deceived "the whole world" (Revelation 12:9), and the most common tool Satan has used to achieve this universal deception is by means of mistranslations of the original text. Some of those mistranslations are quite blatant (e.g. "Easter" instead of "Passover" in Acts 12:4; "the day star" instead of "Lucifer" in 2 Peter 1:19; etc.), but many are actually quite subtle, relying on grammatical nuances.

Subtle mistranslations can be difficult to spot, because on the surface they seem to be quite logical, and frequently they even make sense to our preconditioned minds. That (the preconditioned minds) is why even the translators with all their understanding of biblical Hebrew and biblical Greek still get it wrong in so many cases. After all, if these deceptive ideas conveyed by mistranslations were easy to spot, then Satan would not really have succeeded in deceiving the whole world, would he?

The false ideas about predestination are also based on subtle mistranslations of the Greek text of certain New Testament verses. Now I don't particularly like discussing grammatical technicalities, because such discussions can be difficult to follow. But when a mistranslation, which then becomes the foundation for a false teaching, is based on exploiting grammatical technicalities, then the only way to expose those mistranslations is to carefully examine all the grammatical technicalities that are involved.

Longtime readers would know that I very rarely, if ever, use expressions like "take it from me ..." or "you can believe me that ...". I believe in presenting proof for the things I say (obviously excluding speculations, which are nothing more than speculations precisely because they cannot be proved), which the reader can then evaluate for himself. Unfortunately that proof sometimes involves unraveling grammatical technicalities which expose the flaws underlying a false teaching.

That happens to also be the case with this false teaching about predestination. So please understand that I am not the one who created the grammatical technicalities that I will present; I am simply exposing what others (i.e. the translators) have done; I'm simply exposing where others have violated the rules and "played dirty" in making their translations.

## **ROMANS CHAPTER 8**

The main section of Scripture that is quoted when people speak about the subject of predestination is Romans 8. So let's start by examining the relevant verses in that passage. Here is verse 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.** (Romans 8:28)

Note that **the subject of this verse** are the people who are "the called according to God's purpose". Implied is that we already understand what is meant by "God's purpose". So far, so good.

Now we come to the first problem with our English translations. In our versions verse 29 starts a completely new sentence. **But that is wrong!**

Verse 29 starts with the Greek conjunction "**hoti**", which is translated as "for" in order to introduce a new sentence. However, the conjunction "**hoti**" is really more pointed and means "**because**" or "**so that**".

In plain language, when "**hoti**" is translated as "because" or as "so that", then it becomes apparent that verse 29 is in fact **a continuation of the sentence that started in verse 28.** (There was no punctuation in the original Greek text.)

**By translating "hoti" as "for", the translators changed the focus of this sentence away from the subject of verse 28, to a supposedly completely new thought. That is wrong!**

"Hoti" is a conjunction which joins what follows to what went before. Verse 29 is an elaboration of verse 28. That is what Paul intended when he wrote verse 29. Verse 29 is not a new thought at all.

In plain terms:

In verse 29 Paul explains **why** "all things work together for good to them that are called according to God's purpose".

None of **the translators** really understood what Paul was saying here. They read their own biases into Paul's words. And so they **changed a few things here and there**, so that the text would be compatible with their own views.

It is always a problem when translators try to translate something that they don't really understand. It is not a case of them not understanding the Greek words they translated; they do understand those Greek words. What they don't understand is **the concept** that Paul tried to explain by using these Greek words. They couldn't grasp the intended meaning. This is a problem not only here in Romans 8 but in many other places as well, where the translators were also really clueless as to what the texts they were translating actually mean.

So here is verse 29 as it appears in the KJV.

**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. (Romans 8:29)**

And here is the Greek text for verse 29.

"**Hoti ous proegno kai proorisen** summorphous tes eikonos tou huiou autou prototokon en pollois adelphois."

The 9 English words "for whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate" are supposed to be a translation of the 5 Greek words "hoti ous proegno kai proorisen".

Notice the three-word Greek expression "proegno kai proorisen".

In this expression the verb for "**he did foreknow**" is "proegno", and this is the aorist active indicative third person singular of the verb "**proginosko**", which verb is made up of the words "**pro**" + "**ginosko**".

The verb for "**he did predestinate**" is "proorisen", and this is also the aorist active indicative third person singular of the verb "**proorizo**", which verb is made up of the words "**pro**" + "**horizo**".

**This Greek verb "proorizo" is the sole foundation for all the ideas about "predestination"! This verb is the key to this subject of predestination!**

So let's now examine the Greek root verb "horizo" and then also the verb "proorizo" more closely. The following information is based on the Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament (TDNT) for the entry entitled "horizo, aphorizo, apodiorizo, proorizo".

"**horizo**. This word (from *horos*, '**boundary**') means '**to limit**' and then figuratively 'to fix', 'to appoint'. Time as well as space can be limited." (page 728, the abridged one volume by Geoffrey W. Bromiley; bold type is my own emphasis)

"**proorizo**. This rare and late word **has in the NT the sense** 'to foreordain'." (same page)

We get our English word "horizon" from "horizo", because the horizon is a boundary for how far we can see. Now these two definitions in TDNT present some very interesting information! Can you see the significance of the above statements?

For the root word "**horizo**" this recognized reference work gives us **the exact meaning** of the word. But for the word "**proorizo**" it does **not** actually **give us the meaning at all!** Can you see that?

The statement "**has in the NT the sense**" is a way of telling us that this reference work will only give us **a theological interpretation** for what the author **thinks** the word **should** mean in the NT! Can you see that? For "proorizo" this Theological Dictionary does not provide the actual meaning of the word.

There is a huge difference between providing the actual literal meaning of the Greek words "horos" and "horizo" on the one hand; and then on the other hand stating that "**in the NT**" the word "proorizo" has a certain sense! **What about** the "sense" or "the literal meaning" this word "proorizo" has **outside the NT**, i.e. in a non-religious context?

Since "proorizo" is a rare and late word, therefore we don't really have examples from classical Greek (i.e. we are not aware of uses outside of the NT). Later meanings and also the meaning of "proorizo" in modern Greek (where it means "to destine" or "to intend"), are heavily influenced by the theological meaning that was attached to this word after New Testament times, and therefore cannot be relied on.

So here is the point:

**Not a single biblical scholar understands this verse correctly. All of them have read their own prejudices regarding "predestination" into the Greek word "proorizo". And so this Greek word has since then been used with the meaning that people after New Testament times assigned to this word. And they have consistently assigned a wrong meaning to this word, which assignment in fact ignores the meaning of the root words for "proorizo".**

This is what a **lack of understanding** will produce. And that is why no matter how brilliant a scholar may be, no amount of human intelligence can get around the constraint that "the things of God knows no man without access to the Spirit of God" (see 1 Corinthians 2:11, paraphrased).

To come to a clearer understanding of this Greek word "proorizo", let's examine all the Greek words in the NT that have the common stem "horizo".

### **THE NT GREEK WORDS FORMED FROM "HORIZO"**

1) **Horizo:** As we have already seen, this word refers to "setting a boundary" or "setting a limit". A clear example of this meaning is found in Hebrews 4:7.

Again, **he limits** (Greek "**horizo**") a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. (Hebrews 4:7)

In this verse the meaning of "horizo" is quite clear. It has to do with setting a limit or a boundary.

2) **Aphorizo:** This word means "to sever" or "to separate". A clear example is found in Matthew 25:32.

And before him shall be gathered all nations: and **he shall separate** (Greek "**aphorizo**") them one from another, as a shepherd **divides** (Greek "**aphorizo**") *his* sheep from the goats: (Matthew 25:32)

In this verse the word "aphorizo" is used twice, and the meaning "to sever" or "to separate" or "to divide" is also easy to recognize from the context. This meaning is clearly linked to the meaning of "horizo", since boundaries separate or divide groups of people or animals.

3) **Apodiorizo:** This word also means "to separate" with the intention of defining a distinction between the things that are separated. This word is only used once, in Jude 1:19.

These be **they** who **separate** (Greek "**apodiorizo**") themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. (Jude 1:19)

Thus far all three Greek words very clearly have to do with setting a boundary or a limit, which has the effect of separating people (or animals) into different groups.

4) **Proorizo:** This word is mostly mistranslated as "predestinated". But one verse where we get closer to the correct meaning is 1 Corinthians 2:7.

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom*, which God **ordained** (Greek "**proorizo**") before the world unto our glory: (1 Corinthians 2:7)

"Ordained" is in fact a mistranslation of the Greek word "proorizo". But the translators chose this word

"ordained" because it was quite obvious to them that in this context "predestinated" would clearly be a wrong translation. But the translators simply couldn't understand the correct intended meaning.

However, can you see that the mystery of God wasn't in any way "predestinated"? Rather, before the flood God modified His plan for mankind in such a way that the new plan **limited the number of people** who would be in the first resurrection to exactly 144,000. So before the flood God in effect "**set the boundary**" for how many will be in the first resurrection.

That (God setting a very rigid boundary for how many will be in the first resurrection) is a mystery for most of mankind, which even the Church of God didn't understand in the 1950's and 60's and 70's, a time when many ministers still erroneously believed that the first resurrection will comprise two groups of people: the 144,000 **and** the "great multitude which no man could number" (Revelation 7:9). But that belief is wrong!

At any rate, can you see that here in 1 Corinthians 2:7 the word "proorizo" has nothing at all to do with any kind of individual predestination? The focus is not on individual people; the focus is on God's overall plan for mankind. And this meaning of "proorizo" here in this verse ties perfectly into the meaning of the root word "horizo". So 1 Corinthians 2:7 shows us how we are to understand Romans 8:29.

By contrast, assigning the meaning "to predestinate" to this word "proorizo" is totally out of character with the other three words in this family of words (i.e. horizo, aforizo, and apodiorizo). The meaning "to predestinate" is totally artificial and completely inappropriate. It simply doesn't fit with any of the words in this group.

This word "proorizo" is only **used six times** in the NT, five times by Paul and once by Paul's traveling companion Luke (i.e. in Acts 4:28). Matthew, Mark, John, James, Peter and Jude never used this word "proorizo" in their writings. So none of them ever speak about any supposed "predestination". Six of the authors of NT books never use this word at all, which means that they never in any way refer to "predestination". That should also make us think. If there really was such a thing as "predestination", then why would six of the eight NT authors have completely ignored this subject?

## **THE WORD "PROORIZO"**

Here is the correct meaning with which the Apostle Paul used this word "proorizo".

This word does **NOT** mean "**to predestinate**"! The root word "horizo" **really means: to limit, to set a boundary, to set parameters!** And the word "proorizo" means "**to set a limit before**". That is 100% in keeping with the meanings of the root word "horizo" and the prefix "pro".

Now without an understanding of the plan of God, by which plan God **beforehand** set a limit of exactly 144,000 people for the first resurrection, it is pretty well impossible for any scholar to comprehend the correct meaning for the word "proorizo". **Scholars cannot grasp that for a certain phase of His plan God has in advance set a very clear limit**, a boundary which may not be exceeded. But you should be able to understand this.

So can **you** understand the meaning of the word "proorizo"? It refers to a predetermined boundary which may not be exceeded.

## **BACK TO ROMANS 8:29**

Now let's continue with Romans 8:29.

The word "**ginosko**" means "**to know**", and "**horizo**" means "**to determine a limit**" or "to establish a boundary". In the Greek text both these verbs have the prefix "pro", which means "**before**". So "proginosko" means "**to know in advance**" or "**to know before**". And "proorizo" means "**to determine in advance a boundary**".

Notice that **these two Greek verbs are joined by the conjunction "kai"**. This three-word Greek expression "proegno kai proorisen" means "to know in advance and to determine a limit in advance". The word "and" is the correct translation for the Greek word "kai" in this context.

Yes, at other times it is sometimes appropriate to translate "kai" as "also"; but that is not the case here in Romans 8:29, in spite of what most scholars have done.

In this expression "proegno kai proorisen" **the two verbs are in the identical form in every way, and they are joined by the word "and"**! It is **one** expression, which our translators have changed into **two** expressions because of their lack of understanding. Can you see that? This mistranslation is basically of the same magnitude as is the mistranslation of 2 Timothy 3:16.

Our English translations of Romans 8:29 have changed the one 3-word Greek expression into the following **two English expressions**:

- 1) whom he did foreknow
- 2) he also did predestinate

That is wrong!

In this wrong format "he also did predestinate" is presented **as a consequence** of the first expression "whom he did foreknow". And the expression "whom he did foreknow" is presented **as a prerequisite** for the expression "he also did predestinate". It is presented as a form of progression. That is achieved by mistranslating "kai" in this context as "also". And that mistranslation may sound pretty logical to us, as if Paul used the first expression as a foundation for the second expression. We can follow that kind of reasoning. But it is wrong!

In Paul's Greek text **these two verbs are joined on equal terms by the word "and"**! They are **not** presented as the second one being a consequence of the first one. They are presented as equal terms.

Yes, I know, this is all very subtle! Guess who is the original master of all subtleties? (Hint: consider Genesis 3:1.) This is a mistranslation with huge consequences, because it presents the foundation for the false teaching about predestination.

**The focus which Paul's statement has in the Greek language has been completely altered by these English translations, and that is in addition to mistranslating "proorizo".**

So now back to the rest of the Greek text of verse 29.

- 1) The Greek conjunction "**hoti**" means "**because**".
- 2) The Greek pronoun "**ous**" means "**whom**".
- 3) In this context the Greek conjunction "**kai**" means "**and**", which is what "kai" means about 90% of the

time in the over 9000 places where it is used in the New Testament. It overwhelmingly means "and"!

So the **first 5 Greek words** of verse 29 mean:

"because whom He foreknew and predetermined (i.e. within the limits God had set)".

Now let's see **why** Paul introduced this statement with the word "because". Who is this talking about? The point Paul is making is this:

"All things work together for good to them who are called according to God's purpose of building the Family of God (verse 28), **because** the people God pre-knew **and** predetermined ..." (and then follows the next part of verse 29).

So let's now look at that next part of verse 29.

The Greek adjective "summorphous" is the accusative plural masculine of "summorphos", made up of the words "**sun**" which means "**with**" + "**morphe**" which means "**form**". Now this adjective "summorphos" is typically used to describe "**the essence in character**" and not merely a form or outline. In other words, "summorphos" describes something that is complete and durable, character-wise.

In our English translations "summorphous" is translated as "to the image". But it really **should be** translated as something like "**the character-image**". It is a reference to a specific type of character.

## **A GRAMMATICAL TECHNICALITY**

Now we come to **a grammatical technicality**. This may seem to be somewhat complicated, but it is extremely important. I will try to simplify this point as much as possible. See if you can understand this?

I mentioned that "**summorphous**" is in the accusative case. This simply means that **Paul used this word as the direct object** in the statement he was making. In other words, "summorphous" represents the direct object **for the statement that precedes this word**.

So when **our English translations** translate "summorphous" as "**to** the image", then they **have changed this into the indirect object** of the preceding statement. This represents a change in focus, from the focus Paul presented when he wrote this letter. This may seem like a minor technicality, but it has profound consequences.

Here is the point:

Since the adjective "summorphous" is presented by Paul as the direct object (i.e. the accusative case) of the preceding statement, therefore **Paul must also have implied an obvious verb** to qualify this direct object. Keep in mind that in biblical Greek auxiliary verbs are commonly implied, as is demonstrated by **the great number of italic font verbs** found in the KJV of the NT. (Examples of auxiliary verbs are forms of "be, do, have" and "shall, will" for the future tenses.)

So the accusative case "summorphous" means that in English verse 29 should correctly read as follows:

"because the people God pre-knew and predetermined *to have* **the character-image** ..."

Note that I have put the words "*to have*" in italics, to indicate that they are not in the actual Greek text,

but that they are clearly implied by Paul, because Paul wrote the word for "character-image" in the direct object (i.e. accusative) case. And **the direct object implies a verb** between the subject and the direct object. This means that there simply **must** be a verb between the words "the people" and the words "the character-image". (The verbs "pre-knew" and "predetermined" apply to God and not to the subject of this sentence, which subject is "the people".) It is "the people" who are to have that "character-image"; and **that character-image is what God both pre-knew and predetermined!**

I realize that this is all quite technical for most people. And Satan has confused most people by dealing deceitfully with these technicalities.

So here is the point we need to understand:

When Paul wrote this, in Paul's mind **what was "predetermined" and "pre-known"** to God was **what would be the ultimate outcome** for the people that God would call! What was pre-known and predetermined by God was **what type of character** all those in the first resurrection **would have**, rather than predetermining who those individuals would be! And the predetermining was within the clear limits which God had set, those limits being exactly 144,000.

What has been **predetermined** by God is **"what" and not "who"**!

To repeat in the most simple terms: **what was "predestinated" was the type of character** all those in the first resurrection would have! But God did **not** "predestinate" **who** would be a part of that group!

That is the point Paul was making! And this is compatible with everything else that Paul wrote in all of his letters.

It is Satan who has deceived the whole world into a false idea about "predestination"! **Regarding any specific individual human being, there is no such thing as predestination for the ultimate outcome of that person's life.**

Simply put: God predetermined that there would be exactly 144,000 people in the first resurrection, who would all have the same character that Jesus Christ has. But the identities of those 144,000 people are not decided by God until they have completed their physical lives.

Yes, upon real repentance their names (i.e. including our names) are already added to the Book of Life, in anticipation of them making the grade. So after people have come to real repentance this removes some of the anonymity, but their (i.e. including our) names are only added to the Book of Life on the clear understanding that it is still quite possible for those names to still be "blotted out".

Revelation 3:5 tells us that those who overcome will not have their names blotted out of the Book of Life, implying that if those individuals do not overcome, then their names will be blotted out of that book. This potential, that the names of people who do not overcome could still be blotted out, retains a certain anonymity regarding the final composition of that group of 144,000 people. Now once people have lived a faithful life in response to God's calling, then their inclusion in that group of 144,000 is secure and no longer anonymous. This applies to people like Abraham, Moses, David, etc., who have completed their physical lives.

Let's now continue with verse 29.

The Greek words "**tes eikonos**" are both in the genitive singular case. They mean "**of the likeness**". (These words are the feminine gender.)

The Greek words "**tou huiou autou**" are also all in the genitive singular case. They mean "**of his son**". (These words are the masculine gender.)

So our translation of verse 29 now looks as follows:

**"because the people God pre-knew and predetermined to have the character-image of the likeness of His Son ..."**

Let's continue with our translation.

The Greek pronoun "**auton**" is the accusative singular masculine form of the pronoun "autos", and it means "**HIM**"! Note that the accusative case **cannot mean "he"**! So it doesn't really translate as "that **HE** might be ...".

The pronoun "auton" is clearly the accusative case, and must therefore be translated as "**HIM**"! This pronoun is the object of this statement; it is not the subject of the statement that Paul made. So here we have another subtle twist in emphasis in our English mistranslations.

The Greek adjective "**prototokon**" is the accusative singular masculine form of "prototokos", which means "**firstborn**".

The Greek expression "**en pollois adelphois**" is in the dative plural masculine form, required by the preposition "en", and it means "**among many brethren**".

So now we can put **the whole picture for verses 28-29** together.

"All things work together for good to them who are called according to God's purpose (of building the Family of God), **because** the people God pre-knew **and** predetermined **to have** the character-image of the likeness of His Son, **for Him** (i.e. for that Son) to be (i.e. **to become**) firstborn among many brethren."

This may all seem to be rather complicated, but in these verses Paul was making the same point that the Apostle John made in his first letter.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but **we know** that, **when he shall appear, we shall be like him**; for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2)

Here John has the same focus which Paul has in Romans 8. God has predetermined a specific number of human beings **who will all have the character-image of Jesus Christ**. They have the same character as Jesus Christ, and not the same looks as Jesus Christ; and therefore Jesus Christ grants them the privilege to sit with Him on His throne (Revelation 3:21). Only those who have the same character that Jesus Christ has can possibly sit with Christ on Christ's throne. Anyone with lesser character would never be granted that privilege.

"Predestination" is **not** about **who** has been predetermined, **but** about **what God has predetermined**. The focus is on **what** God will do for us in the resurrection. Nowhere in Romans 8 is there any focus on some individuals supposedly being predetermined or predestinated. It is our destiny to become the sons of God by a resurrection.

This is the same potential destiny for **all** the people God calls. But whether or not we will make it to that destiny has not yet been decided by God, because that outcome depends totally on how we respond to the calling of God, how we live our lives.

Let's continue with the next verse.

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. (Romans 8:30)

In this verse the Apostle Paul summarized the whole process as follows:

1) **God devised a plan** to build the Family of God. This is implied by the expression "whom He did predestinate" (i.e. "whom He predetermined to have the opportunity to be in the first resurrection"), because that plan requires a certain number of people to be prepared for the first resurrection.

2) In order to carry out that plan God has "called" a certain number of people. This is a **logical consequence** of the plan God set in motion.

3) And amongst the people that God has called, those that have repented, those are the ones God has also "justified", i.e. God has forgiven all their past guilt.

But keep in mind that not all those that are called will end up in the first resurrection, because **many who are called do not respond to God's calling**. That is what Jesus Christ meant when He said, "many are called but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14), because the many end up on stony ground and among thorns.

In Romans 11:29 Paul pointed out that "the calling of God is without repentance", meaning that **the calling of God is unchangeable**. This means that those who do not respond appropriately to that calling from God are likely to end up in the lake of fire! So when Jesus Christ said that "many are called but few are chosen" I believe that Jesus Christ meant that "many" will therefore end up in the lake of fire, where there will be very short-lived "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (see Matthew 22:13; etc.).

In this regard we need to understand once and for all that whenever any activity involves individuals using their own free wills to either accept God's way of thinking and to obey God's laws joyfully, or else to resist God's way of using their minds and to go against God's will, then **there will always be a lot of collateral damage!** There will always be **large numbers of people** who will have to be permanently destroyed by the lake of fire! "That is the nature of the beast" (a figure of speech to convey that that is the essence of free will being exercised; this is not meant to be a reference to some end-time individual).

**As far as "collateral damage" is concerned: There was a lot of collateral damage amongst the angels who had been given a free will, with one third of the angels following Satan. There was a staggering amount of collateral damage amongst all the people who lived before the flood. There was a lot of collateral damage amongst the people of Israel who came out of Egypt with Moses. And that level of collateral damage continued all the way down to the national captivities for both Israel and Judah. And in the future there will once again be a huge amount of collateral damage during the millennium when Jesus Christ will be ruling, that collateral damage being in the form of a rebellion by "Gog and Meshech and Tubal" (see Ezekiel 38 and 39). And at the end of Jesus Christ's 1000-year perfect rule over this earth there will once again be a staggering amount of collateral damage (see Revelation 20:8-9). In fact, God created this whole present universe and everything in it with a physical composition, precisely for God to be able to deal with all the collateral damage that would occur from the implementation of God's plan to create the Family of God.**

So don't for one moment think that this present age (i.e. from after the flood up to Christ's second coming) will somehow escape with only very minor collateral damage, because that is simply not correct! Yes, the vast majority of human beings are at this time spiritually blinded, so that they may come up in

the second resurrection. However, we need to understand very clearly that **there will be a lot of collateral damage amongst the people that God has called during this New Testament age before Christ's second coming!** It is wishful thinking on our part when we try to freely assign all **those who don't respond to God's calling** to the time of the second resurrection. There is accountability and God is not playing games. And you need to understand the truth.

Anyway, to continue with Paul's summary:

4) And **God has also predetermined the ultimate outcome**, that all those who have been justified will in due time also be "glorified".

Now note that at this point in time God has very clearly **NOT YET** "glorified" any of us! Paul was simply spelling out the whole process from being called by God to eventually being given a glorious new spirit body in the resurrection. **It is this process that Paul was explaining**; but Paul was not speaking about any one specific individual supposedly being selected before birth and then guaranteed salvation.

Verse 30 concludes Paul's discussion of this process, which process culminates in the first resurrection. From verse 31 onwards Paul then says: when we understand this staggering future God has planned for us, what could possibly separate us from God fulfilling His promises?

## **THE PEOPLE GOD "KNEW" BEFORE THEY WERE BORN**

People sometimes reason that for some people God supposedly determined in advance that they would be in the first resurrection. But that is not correct!

A very small number of people were selected by God before these people were even born. However, what we need to understand in all those cases is this:

God has occasionally chosen certain people even **before their birth** for the explicit purpose that these people would fulfill a very specific job. With all of these "pre-birth selections" what was predetermined was **the job these people would perform!** The exact same point is true for people who were chosen by God during their lifetime, including all of us, that in each case they, again including us, were chosen to perform a very specific job (see Romans 12:4-5).

And when God has chosen such people, whether before their birth or whether after they had been born, in each case God guaranteed that **these individuals would perform the jobs for which God had chosen them**. The job performance of people chosen before their birth was guaranteed!

What was **never** guaranteed in advance was whether or not these individuals themselves would end up in the first resurrection!

**Examples of people God selected for specific jobs before these people were even born include King Cyrus of Persia (Isaiah 44:28 and Isaiah 45:1), and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5), and John the Baptist (Luke 1:13-17). Examples of people God selected for specific jobs after these people had been born include Amos (Amos 7:14-15), and Jonah (Jonah 1:1-2), and David to be king instead of Saul (1 Samuel 16:1), and the judges, etc.**

Cyrus, Jeremiah and John the Baptist were each selected to perform a very specific job. In this group Cyrus was not offered the opportunity to be in the first resurrection; and for Jeremiah and John the Baptist their inclusion in the group for the first resurrection depended on how and with what attitude they

performed the jobs God had given them.

However, their "making it" was not a foregone conclusion. Consider the sober warning Jesus Christ sent to John the Baptist in Matthew 11:6. While the indications are that John the Baptist did heed this warning and that he will thus be in the first resurrection, the possibility existed that John could have taken offence, in which case he would not have secured a place in the first resurrection. His "making it" was not a foregone conclusion.

Amongst those that God selected after they were born, and who also performed the jobs God wanted them to perform (David, Amos, Jonah, etc.), the indications don't really look good for the prophet Jonah. The Book of Jonah closes with Jonah being in a really bad attitude towards God, being extremely angry with God ("Jonah was very angry", Jonah 4:1). The fact that, after God had reasoned with Jonah, there is not the slightest indication that Jonah in any way relented in his attitude, doesn't look good for Jonah. At any rate, the Book of Jonah illustrates that when God selects someone to do a job, then God also sees to it that that person will do that job, even if it is with a bad attitude!

However, in our context here the point is this: God calling someone to do a specific job does not automatically grant that person a part in the first resurrection. They are still free moral agents. And even if they were selected for a specific job before birth, they could still get into a wrong attitude towards God and miss out on salvation altogether.

So pre-selection of certain specific individuals has to do with those individuals performing very specific jobs. This means that (apart from Cyrus) those individuals have been called by God. However, such pre-selection has no influence at all on whether or not those individuals end up in the first resurrection. Whether or not they end up in the first resurrection depends entirely on their character, on how they perform the responsibilities God has bestowed on them.

So for such individuals it is not predetermined that they will surely be in the first resurrection.

Let's now look at Ephesians chapter 1.

## **EPHESIANS CHAPTER 1**

Here are verses 4-5.

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: **Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children** by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (Ephesians 1:4-5)

I have explained the expression "the foundation of the world" at length in my 12-page article entitled "What Does The Expression 'The Foundation Of The World' Really Mean?", as well as in the subsequent 80-page article entitled "Future Eternity In The New Heaven And The New Earth". Basically this expression "the foundation of the world" refers to "**the throwing down of human society at the time of Noah's flood**".

Here in Ephesians 1:4 Paul says that God "has chosen us in Him before God threw down human society at the time of the flood". Around 120 years before the flood **God modified His plan** to make provision for the second resurrection. It is this fact, of God having formulated the new plan before He threw down human society, which Paul is referring to in verse 4. Paul uses the expression "has chosen us" **in a generic sense**, referring collectively to the whole group that will make up the people in the first

resurrection, without having any specific individuals in mind.

Note!

**It was the introduction of the first resurrection into the plan of God that brought the idea of "predestination" into existence!**

By the word "predestination" here I mean "**the predetermined number**" of individuals who will make up the first resurrection. In plain words: God "predetermined" that **exactly 144,000** individuals will be in the first resurrection, no more and no less. **That is as far as "predestination" goes.** It has nothing whatsoever to do with **who** will be in that group. The Apostle Paul made quite clear that **it was still possible for Paul himself to be excluded from that number.** See 1 Corinthians 9:27 regarding the potential danger of even Paul becoming "a castaway".

Now let's look at verse 5.

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

The Greek word in verse 5 is also a form of the verb "proorizo". It means "to predetermine" based on limits that God has set. Notice that this "predetermining" is "**unto something**", and it is "**according to something**". "Unto something" refers to **the plan** God has set in motion. "According to something" refers to "**the motivation for the plan**". That motivation is to fulfill the good pleasure of the will of God.

Again, in this verse **Paul is speaking generically**, including all those who will be in the first resurrection. There is nothing here to imply "individual predestination" regarding salvation before the time an individual is born.

Now let's look at verses 11-12.

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: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. (Ephesians 1:11-12)

These verses say that the predetermining is based on "the purpose of God", which is to build the Family of God (see Paul's reference to "**the household of God**" in Ephesians 2:19). And that predetermining involves a certain number of individuals, which number happens to include all of us who have been called by God. Paul is again speaking in a generic sense, not in an individual sense, when he refers to us "being predetermined according to the purpose of God".

We have now looked at four of the six places where the word "proorizo" is used. Let's also briefly look at the other two places.

Here is Luke's only use of this word in the Book of Acts.

For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel **determined before** (proorizo) to be done. (Acts 4:28)

This is a reference to the plan which God set in motion after the flood in the days of Noah. At that time God set new limits for humanity, and also for how many people will be in the first resurrection. Obviously, there is nothing in this verse that in any way implies individual personal "predestination" for some people.

Paul's other use of this Greek word is in 1 Corinthians 2:7, which we have already briefly examined.

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom*, which God **ordained** (proorizo) before (pro) the world (Greek "aion" = age) unto our glory: (1 Corinthians 2:7)

In this verse "proorizo" is mistranslated as "ordained". The point Paul made in this verse is this: the decision to implement the mystery of God, which involves more than one resurrection, was made by God before this present age started. This present age started after the flood, and God made the decision for this before the flood. So **this mystery**, which **sets an inflexible limit** for how many will be in the first resurrection, was preordained before this present age, which age started after the flood. Again, this verse does not imply any specific individuals being "predestinated" to salvation or to be called by God.

That covers all six places where this word "proorizo" (the word translated as "predestinated") is used.

We might also consider one other statement from Paul, which is found in the Book of Galatians.

But when it pleased **God, who separated me from my mother's womb**, and called *me* by his grace, (Galatians 1:15)

This does not in any way imply that Paul was selected by God **before** he was born! The expression "from my mother's womb" is a translation of the Greek text "**ek** koilias metros mou". The Greek preposition "ek" means "**out of**" or "**out from**", implying motion away from something.

So while some people may interpret this to mean that Paul claimed that God selected him before he was born, the Greek preposition "ek" makes clear that Paul was referring to God "separating him" (Greek "aphorizo", with the same root as the word "proorizo"!) **after he had exited from the womb!** The Greek word "aphorizo" is made up of "apo" + "horizo". And the Greek preposition "apo" refers to **separation!** So it should be clear that Paul was referring to something that happened after he had exited the womb, i.e. after he had been born. There is no indication whatsoever that God somehow selected Paul before Paul was born!

Note that Paul does not in any way indicate when "after he had exited the womb" God actually "separated him". To be clear, Paul does not claim that God had already selected him while he was still a baby! He only claims that God "separated him" **at some point during his life**, after he had been born.

In this context consider the following point.

When Stephen was stoned, Paul was a young man (Acts 7:58). This means that Paul was in his very late teens or even early 20's at the time Jesus Christ was crucified. Now IF God had already set Paul apart as a young child (i.e. soon after birth), which would have been **more than a decade before Jesus Christ started His ministry**, then there is no way that God would not have exposed Paul to Christ's ministry! During Christ's ministry God did not set apart **anyone** in Palestine who did not have the opportunity to be exposed to witnessing some part of the ministry of Jesus Christ.

While Jesus Christ was preaching for 3.5 years, there is no way that God was somehow "setting apart" anyone in the area of Jerusalem (that would have been the time when Paul was "brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel"; see Acts 22:3) who would not have been exposed to Jesus Christ's ministry!

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul made clear that **he had never seen Jesus Christ during His ministry**. After saying that after His resurrection Jesus Christ was seen by Peter and James and all the other apostles and even over 500 brethren of God's Church, Paul then said "**and last of all He was seen by me also, as one born out of due time**" (1 Corinthians 15:8).

Paul was someone "born out of due time" simply because during Jesus Christ's earthly ministry God had not yet called Paul. And if God had not yet called Paul, then God had also not yet separated Paul during the time of Christ's ministry.

So don't read something into Paul's use of the expression "out from my mother's womb", which Paul did not intend to imply. Paul used this expression somewhat like we might freely use the expression "this is something I have known **all my life**", without intending to imply "from the minute I was born"!

The key to understanding this whole matter of predestination is this:

When God set the present plan in motion, then God "predestinated" that 144,000 individuals would be in the first resurrection, no more and no less. God in effect predetermined the outcome; God predetermined **what** will happen. But God has **not** at any time decided in advance **who** will be the individuals in the first resurrection.

The idea of being "predestinated" to either "being saved" or else "to be lost" is a very perverse, diabolical heretical deception of the worst kind! Satan is the author of that deception (Revelation 12:9), which is aimed at removing free choice from human beings.

In one sense the only Scripture we need to totally demolish the false ideas regarding predestination is Deuteronomy 30:19.

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that I have set before you life and death*, blessing and cursing: **therefore choose life**, that both thou and thy seed may live: (Deuteronomy 30:19)

The fact that God expects people to make a choice between "life and death" means that it is impossible for anyone "to be predestinated" to either be saved or else to be lost. Nowhere does the Bible teach that anyone is "predestinated" in the sense of the outcome already being predetermined, and any outcome other than what is "predestinated" being impossible.

God has predetermined that exactly 144,000 individuals will be in the first resurrection. And the hope of our calling is that we have been granted the opportunity, but not yet the certainty, to be a part of that group of 144,000.

Frank W Nelte