



Diakrisis (Australia)

'But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern [diakrisis] both good and evil', (Heb.5:14)

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New E-mail

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Conference and New Itinerary

The editor will be speaking at a Conference in Sydney and in various churches in Qld, NSW and Victoria, between September-December (See P.19 for details). Churches wishing to be added to the itinerary, please contact the editor. Details of the itinerary will be printed in the next newsletter.

Editor's Comment

Today there is no shortage of man made false doctrines and extra biblical inventions to be exposed. Thus many are confused today as to what is truth and error. But much of this is shaped by what they hear or read on the Internet, or in sermons, and sadly apart from *personal study* in the scriptures. Christians today more than ever need to think for themselves, and not have others do the thinking for them. It often surprises people today when they discover that what they have heard and believed so often on some subject is actually not Biblical or orthodox. We are told to '*test the spirits*' (1Jn.4:1) and '*search the scriptures*' to see 'whether these things are so' (Acts 17:11). Careful study of the scriptures for doctrine, without 'reading' ideas into verses, will in the main be that which is historic and orthodox. A study of the Reformers, the Puritans and the great evangelists and revivalists of old will show a common consensus on doctrines, especially in the area of salvation and the Gospel. However, the 20th century has seen a wholesale departure from many historic doctrines.

When it comes to salvation and the Gospel, much false teaching stems from one area of doctrine which underlies the Gospel. It is seen in the paradox of two questions: '*How is a man made right with God?*' and '*What ability or inability does unsaved man have towards his own salvation?*' We say a 'paradox' because to many the answers to the two questions creates a seeming contradiction. On one hand God promises to justify the one who believes. On the other, man is being told to do something he cannot do in and of himself.

It is the *latter which brings a range of opinions today. When I have asked this question: 'What ability or inability does unsaved man have towards his own salvation?'*, the mixture of answers is staggering. Some say he can believe and choose Christ in and of himself; others say the Holy Spirit tries to save with the Gospel and then leaves it up to the person to choose; and still others say that unsaved man cannot do anything towards his salvation in and of himself, period.

One would think that these widely different views cannot all contain the truth of the matter. Yet the scriptures are quite sure on this subject. If the reader will take the time to read even the first few scriptures listed here, it will be obvious what God says about what man cannot do - 1Cor.2:14; Rom.8:7; Jn.6:44,65; Eph.2:2-5; Col.2:13; 2Cor.4:4; Eph.4:18; Jn.8:34; Rom.3:11-18; Jer.17:9.

This absolute depravity and inability of the unsaved man in and of himself is resisted by so many in the church today. It seems that *man will just not agree to be nothing so that God would be everything*. This is no less than sinful pride which only study and the Spirit can break. But if the total inability of unsaved man will not be understood then how shallow will our understanding of God's Grace be? How can the full extent of Grace be marvelled at if we do not understand the full extent of our depravity and inability in not deserving that Grace?

Today we hear much about what man can do, but not enough of what God has done for the helpless sinner to be saved. Often the sinner is represented as helping God to save him; worse, God is represented as helping man to save himself.

Fear of the Lord includes fear of His Word. When we come to seeming contradictions (paradoxes) of difficult passages, and if we cannot harmonise those scriptures, then we must not adopt something that may just make logical sense to us. The scriptures are full of paradoxes and are not an end to work out our own plans.

Too often we hear some who would argue against the sovereignty of God in the salvation of the elect (and the judgement of the rest), by charging us with '*that makes God the author of sin*'. Such a horrible and false accusation we would urge Christians not to charge unless someone has actually stated that, for we will give an account for every idle word and false accusation on the day of judgement (Matt.12:36; Jn.7:24).

We hold that *God permits sin but is not the author of it* because His character is such that He cannot create or ordain evil. But He has and will *permit* and *use* evil for His purposes. Indeed God foreordained the means for the evil that would be done in the death of His only begotten Son (Acts 4:28).

What is missing in much doctrine today is that *God is to be glorified*, and thus in salvation and the Gospel, God must be the author and the finisher of our faith (Heb.12:2). The soundness of doctrine should be measured in *the glory it gives to God, not man*.

In the salvation of man, there is an enslaved will in man and there is a free will in God; one is lesser and one is immeasurably superior. One has to overcome the other in salvation, since all men are rejecting God in their unsaved sinful state. It is the Gospel with the power of the Spirit that sets the person free (Jn.8:34,36). Until that time there is enmity between man and God (Rom.8:7; Eph.2:16,17), an enslavement of the will to sin (Rom.8:34), a blindness under the hand of Satan (2Cor.4:4) and a broad road to travel (Matt.7:13). The all powerful God who spoke creation into being is the same who creates in the unwilling man a will that is willing to believe and who will then give glory to God.

If God can fix our birth and death and our times, can He not fix the day of our salvation? If He is thus sovereign, can He not fix even how we are converted? Did He not do so with Paul on the road to Damascus? Did He not do so with Nebuchadnezzar who was brought down to the dust of the earth and humbled to say '*all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he does according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What have you done?*' (Dan.4:35).

The sovereignty of God in the predestination, election and salvation of the saints is an absolute necessity because man on his own cannot and will not believe. Man never would have willed to choose God unless God turned his will to be willing. Not one soul would be saved if left to their own will. As Charles Spurgeon stated in many sermons: '*the ones who can seek God are the ones who God has sought first*'.

In our study of the Bible, in doctrine, teaching, in the Gospel, in our salvation and walk with God, let us give glory to the sovereign One who is glorious!

Terry Arnold

Persecutions and Martyrdom

Open Doors 2021 report revealed two important persecution trends in 2020. The number of Christians killed has increased by 60% this year, mostly because of Islamic violence against Nigerian Christians. In Nigeria, over 2,200 Christians were murdered by radical Islamists. This number makes up slightly less than half of the 4,761 Christians killed for their faith worldwide, according to Open Doors statistics.

Other persecution hotspots around the globe include China and India. In China, the Communist Party has cracked down on Christians by using surveillance technology. In the last year, it has integrated its social credit and video security system, enabling it to track its people and punish them for attending church.

In India, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party has encouraged persecution of Christians by sanctioning Hindu extremism. The party has told its nation that only Hindus are truly Indian. Political leaders have discouraged police from responding to attacks on Christians.

Christians face the most persecution worldwide because they are the largest minority faith in many countries.

The Flood a ‘Myth’; Now a ‘Second Flood’?

‘And the Lord smelled a sweet savor; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done’ (Genesis 8:21)

Here, God is clearly telling us, through His Written Word, that He will never again destroy the earth by a flood...

...The Pope has announced in a new book that he believes ‘global warming’ will bring about a second flood. Except in Pope Francis’s version of a future flood, it will be real...while the past one was myth! Here is what the apostate head of the Roman Catholic Church has said: ‘The biblical one, according to experts, is a mythical tale’.

What a damnable lie...Pope Francis looks to men for his wisdom...A person of faith begins by believing Scripture...Men’s views of evolution - the experts - have been changing their mind since the mid-19th c. Until the 19th c., liberal scholars believed the biblical record of the Hittites was mythological...But then, in 1834, the first Hittite ruins were found...Now we have the leader of a world religion claiming that the Bible is myth, while a future global flood is a certainty!

‘Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to deceitful spirits, and doctrines of demons; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron’ (1Tim.4:1,2)

(Apostasy Alert, 07 March 2021)

Classic Quotes For Meditation

2Corinthians 5:21

'...He reconciled our evils to bestow His good, and submitted to our curse to impart to us His blessings; sustained the extremity of that wrath we had deserved, to confer upon us the grace He had purchased. The sin in us, which He was free from, was by divine estimation transferred upon Him, as if He were guilty, that the righteousness He has, which we were destitute of, might be transferred upon us, as if we were innocent. He was made sin, as if He had sinned all the sins of men, and we are made righteousness, as if we had not sinned at all.'

(The Puritan Charnock, 'Cleansing Virtue of Christs Blood'; Works 3:519)

Sin

'Christians, would not your hearts rise against them that should kill your father, mother, brother, wife, husband; dearest relations...! O then how should, your hearts and souls rise against sins! Surely your sin it was that murdered Christ, that killed Him, which is instead of all relations, is a thousand, thousand times dearer to you, than father, mother, husband, child, or whomsoever; one thought of this should methinks, be enough to make you say, as Job did, 'I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes' Job 42:6. Oh! What is the cross on the back of Christ? My sins; oh! What is that crown on the head of Christ? My sins oh! what is the nail in the right hand, and that other in the left hand of Christ? My sins oh! What is that spear in the side of Christ? My sins; what are those nails and wounds in the feet of Christ? My sins...oh my sins, my sins!'

(*'Looking Unto Jesus'*, Ambrose, AD372)

God's Mercy and Justice

'God's wisdom is displayed by the fact that God's justice and mercy are both satisfied: Justice in punishing [Christ and sin], and mercy in pardoning'.

(Goodwin - a Puritan)

'The Father would have the most excellent person, one next to himself, equal to Him in all glorious perfections of his nature (Phil.2:6) die on a disgraceful cross, be exposed to the flames of divine wrath rather than sin should live, and His holiness remain for ever disparaged by violations of the law...God seems to lay aside the bowels of a Father and put on the garb of an irreconcilable enemy'.

(The Puritan Charnock 'Existence and Attributes', 484)

Prayer

'In our earnest petitions we do not bring God's will to ours but ours to Him. Prayer is a golden chain that reaches from Heaven to earth...and although we think to move Heaven to us, yet we move ourselves to Him. As the ship that is fastened with the cable doth not bring the haven to it, but itself to the haven, so the change prayer makes is not in God, but in ourselves...'

(Burgess, Expository Sermons)

Predestination and 'Foreknowledge' - a Closer Look

Introduction

The word 'predestination' produces some interesting reactions among professing Christians today. This author has many times heard Christians simply state: '*I don't believe in predestination*'. Others will say they agree with predestination but somehow qualify it with a doctrine of man's 'free will' which makes the literal meaning of predestination somehow more palatable.

But the most common teaching today is the 'foreknowledge' argument - that predestination is the result of God looking down the corridors of time and seeing who of their own free will would choose Christ and accept the Gospel - and then based on that 'foreknowledge' God predestinates and elects them to salvation. This understanding is now the most common explanation of predestination. But how logical is this doctrine? Is it found in scripture? What ramifications does it have on the person of God?

The Arguments

The word 'predestination' has a clear meaning. The Greek word '*proorízo*' ('*pro*' - 'before' / '*orizo*' - 'to determine') means *to determine or decree beforehand*. The Greek word is also translated '*determined before*' and '*ordained*' (Acts 4:28; 1Cor.2:7). The synonym '*foreordained*' also has the similar meaning.

Election ('*eklégo*') means a choosing, a choice or special selection done by the free will of God.

Whether we like these words and their doctrines or not, it is difficult to deny 'predestination', because the Greek word is mentioned six times in the New Testament, and this is apart from other similar words that teach the same. (Some examples of the word are in Acts 4:28; Romans 8:29,30; 1Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:5,11).

'Predestination' is in enough biblical texts such that it cannot be ignored. All Bible believing Christians would have to believe in, and hold to, a doctrine that includes 'predestination'.

Again, the common teaching today with predestination is that God foresees who of their own 'free will' would choose Christ and so then God predestinates them. This is the 'foreknowledge view' of predestination.

The counter and historical view of most of the Reformers, the Puritans, the Divines and the revivalists and evangelists down the running centuries, was that God's prior decree to elect a nation or any individual was unconditional and thus not based on anything in and of man himself.

These two differing views are quite contradictory. Although both views will cite scripture as proof, the modern foreknowledge view often appears most logical and satisfying to the human mind which would see the issue as a contradictory puzzle to be solved. The puzzle arises because logically to some, if

God predestinates only some of his own pleasure and will, then is He 'unfair' in predestinating and electing only some and not all?

Some theologians have tried to solve this by stating that because God is eternal and is outside of any time as we know it, then there is no such thing as 'foreknowledge' to do with time with Him, as there is no such dimension in God's eternal kingdom. God sees everything as 'now'. However, this argument is difficult to sustain when much of the Bible is written with the concept of days, years and time in general, even to prophetic events occurring in measured time. God has written his revelation in terms of 'time' which we can understand. To ignore that in the issues of predestination and election is to avoid the way the Bible is written, but also to deny the 'pre' in 'predestination'. The foreknowledge view is actually not *predestination* but a *postdestination*, since the decree of God to save is based on, and done *as a result of*, the foreknowledge gained.

There are two other ways we can test the foreknowledge argument and the theology of predestination - by *logic* and by *scripture*.

The Foreknowledge Argument Tested By Logic

'Logical Fallacies' are said to be common errors in reasoning that undermine the logic of one's argument. The logic within the foreknowledge of God in the salvation of mankind argument and the associated 'free will' of an unsaved person, are much contested in philosophy. The foreknowledge argument and 'free will' are broadly dismissed as 'fallacies' by a wide range of philosophers and those who work in the area of logic.

The word 'foreknowledge' has the literal and general meaning of - to know beforehand; to have knowledge of future events. The question could be asked - is God's foreknowledge of any event perfect? If God is perfect in every attribute and without any imperfection, then his foreknowledge also is perfect and without failure. If God's foreknowledge is perfect then it is impossible for any action He foresees to be otherwise to how He sees it. If God knows how any person will act or choose, then it is impossible for that person not to perform the action or decision. There is a *certainty* in this that escapes many. If God does not determine their destinies in His 'foreknowledge' then *who or what determines them?* One prominent theologian sums this difficulty up: *'If we assume that God's knowledge of the future is true (which evangelicals all agree upon), then it is absolutely certain that person A will believe and person B will not. There is no way their lives could turn out any differently than this. Therefore it is fair to say that their destinies are still determined, for they could not be otherwise. But by what are their destinies determined? If they are determined by God himself, then we no longer have election based ultimately on foreknowledge of faith, but rather on God's sovereign will. But if these destinies are not determined by God, then who or what determines them? Certainly no Christian would say that there is some powerful being other than God controlling people's destinies. Therefore the only possible alternative is to say they are determined by some impersonal force, some kind of fate, operative in the universe, making things turn out as they do.'*

But what kind of benefit is this? We have then sacrificed election in love by a personal God for a kind of determinism by an impersonal force and God is no longer to be given the ultimate credit for our salvation'. (1)

The logic of this should not be missed - Where does the determination and sovereignty lie if man is determining his own salvation and God is only 'foreseeing' this? The logic also breaks down when one considers the contradiction of holding the premise that God foreknew who would believe and be saved and yet also to believe that God is trying to save every man. If God knows who will be saved then how also can we believe that the Holy Spirit does all He can do to save any man in the world? The Holy Spirit would be wasting time and effort to convert a person who God already knew would not believe. The system of logic within the foreknowledge argument collapses into itself!

Does God leave us in the hands of our own fate by our decision? Can that override the Holy Spirit's sovereign drawing and convicting work? Has then the omnipotence of God failed? Is the creature mightier than the Creator? Does God rule, or is He ruled? Can His will be thwarted? One commentator summarises: *'The event which was thus foreknown must have been, for some cause, certain and fixed; since an uncertain event could not be possibly foreknown. To talk of a foreknowing of a contingent event, that is, of foreknowing an event as certain which may or may not exist, is an absurdity'. (2)*

Logically, the foreknowledge argument is thus self-contradictory. No event can be foreknown unless, in some sense, it has been determined beforehand. If it has not been predetermined, it would not be certain, and therefore God's foreknowledge would be useless since it has God only seeing what will take place. Logically this is irreconcilable. Foreknowledge has to have certainty, and certainty has to have foreordination.

The logic of the foreknowledge argument also breaks down in that what would be the point of predestinating a person if it was already fixed that they would believe? Why decree a thing which God already knows will come to pass? 'Predestination' would become unnecessary!

Another argument now becomes evident - if God foreknew that someone would reject the message of the Gospel, would they then be condemned on something they might never do? Scripture has man condemned for something they are doing - sinning. Does God predestinate some because He foresees they would believe and others are condemned because He foresees they will not believe? Would this be just when they have not actively done so? Would it also be not strictly faith that saves but God's 'foreknowledge' of our faith?

But this logic worsens - what of entire nations or groups who have not believed? Are we to believe that God did not foresee one person to be saved? What of the Amazonian Indians whose whole past generations never believed?

Much more could be said of the various logical fallacies of the foreknowledge argument but it would no doubt confuse and stretch the cognitive abilities of most of us to breaking point. There is a higher, simpler and more absolute court of appeal for both sides of the argument - what does the inspired infallible and inerrant word of God say to this issue? We do have a 'more sure word' by which

we can test the premises and the fallible logic thereof.

The Foreknowledge Argument Tested by Scripture

Although there are one or two scriptures mostly used by people for the foreknowledge argument, most of the premise for that argument does centre around logic to satisfy the ‘difficulties’ of predestination. But the argument that people *can believe in and of themselves by the freedom of their will* is flatly contradicted by God himself! And this is where the heart of the foreknowledge argument first collapses with scripture. It is impossible for unbelievers to believe, decide and choose Christ in and of themselves! Let the scriptures speak to what the unsaved, natural man *cannot* do: ‘*But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*’ (1Cor.2:14); ‘*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*’. *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God*’ (Rom.8:7,8). The end result of this is an emphatic *inability* - the unsaved mind *cannot* do what God desires.

The reason for this is because ‘*the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*’ (Jer.17:9). The phrase ‘*deceitful above all things*’ is not a description of a partial ‘sickness’ but a crookedness ‘*above all things*’ - *above any other deceit known*. It is the heart of unsaved man that *cannot do what the foreknowledge argument teaches*. It requires the sovereign intervention, the ‘quickenings’ (making alive) by God to have it come to life.

This inability flatly contradicts the foreknowledge argument that God predestinates man when he decides for Christ and that he is ‘free’ to do this of his own will. The scriptures are blunt in stating ‘*There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one*’ (Rom.3:10-12). The cause of all this is that man is ‘*dead in sins*’ and can only receive Christ if *made alive by the Spirit* (Eph.2:1; Col.2:13).

But again, if God foresees that some will decide of their own will, then why the need to ‘quicken’ them to life? The logic of God foreknowing who will decide for Christ and then predestinating them is destroyed if God has to make them alive before they can do anything. Unsaved man is a ‘slave to sin’ (Jn.8:34; Rom.6:17,18) and has to be made alive from the spiritual deadness of his sinful state. He is ‘*by nature a child of wrath*’ (Eph.2:2-5). What he needs is the resurrection power of the Spirit of Christ! The Scriptures teach that our ‘*understanding was darkened*’ and we were ‘*alienated from the life of God...because of the blindness of our hearts*’ (Eph.4:18); that we cannot be ‘Born Again’ of anything ‘*of ourselves*’ (Eph.2:8) ‘*nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man*’ but only ‘*of God*’ (Jn.1:13). It is no wonder Jesus said: ‘*No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day...no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father*’ (Jn.6:44,65).

Grace is not Grace if we can do anything in and of ourselves. That would not

be unmerited favour, as Grace is. If God only predestinates and saves us because we had the ability to believe within ourselves, then we could *'boast'*! But rather *'by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast'*. The phrase *'not of yourselves'* leaves no room for *anything* within ourselves. If there is any ability within man then we could well *'boast'*, and worse, we could *rightly* boast! We are the 'pots', He the 'Potter' (Rom.9:21). The Potter is the *'author and the finisher'* of our salvation (Heb.12:2; 5:9).

God also predestinates of His own *'pleasure'* and this was purposed *'in Himself'*, not because of any action of ours. *'Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will...Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in himself'* (Eph.1:5,9).

Did God look down the corridors of time and foresee that Saul of Tarsus would believe and then predestinate him? If there was something in Saul himself to bring this action, then why did God dramatically arrest him, speak to him and temporarily blind him on the road to Damascus, all when he was on his way to slaughter Christians? The Bible has Saul as a *'chosen vessel'* (*'ekloge'* - elect), specially chosen out by God to do his work. There is no hint here that Saul did anything of Himself before God did the electing.

Is God reliant on what man can do before He can predestinate or elect? What of the many dozens of prophecies in scripture which have come to pass with certainty? What of the certainty with Judas and his betrayal - was it not certain, and *foreordained*, rather than 'foreseen' and then subsequently foreordained?

Foreknowledge or Foreordination?

The secular definition of foreknowledge is to know something before it happens. However, when the words 'foreknowledge', 'foreknew', 'foreknow' are studied in scripture it becomes obvious that *foreknowledge and foreordination are inseparably linked*. The Biblical definition of foreordination is not simply the secular definition of just 'a knowledge beforehand'. Proof of this is found in many scriptures...

1Peter 1:2,20

Some use 1Peter 1:2 in an attempt to isolate foreknowledge from Predestination: *'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'*. Note here that the election precedes the working of the Holy Spirit in any act of faith or obedience. Thus the salvation here (which involves and includes 'sanctification') is originally by the election of God in the beginning. It does not say here that God foreknew that any would believe and therefore that's why He chose them apart from any predestination or election. Yet that notion is wrongly 'read' into the text by many today.

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But this 1Peter 1:2 ‘foreknowledge’ is further refuted by verse 20 *in the same passage* where the *same* Greek derivative translated ‘foreknowledge’ is used and yet translated ‘foreordained’ in many translations. It is obvious that the context of the Lamb slain ‘before the foundation of the world’ reveals that the two words ‘foreordained’ and ‘foreknown’ are inseparable! The late Greek expert Spiros Zodhiates says of this foreknowledge, that it is ‘used of events, to previously decide or plan; to foreknow for God is to foreordain; 1Peter 1:19,20 presents Christ as the ‘Lamb of God foreknown from the foundation of the world’. He is said to be foreknown because God had planned and determined in His eternal counsel to provide His Son as a sacrifice for His people. Certainly more is meant than that God knew ahead of time that Christ would so come and die. God’s foreknowledge is given here as the cause for His Son’s sacrifice - because He planned and decreed it’. (3)

Acts 2:23

The word ‘foreknowledge’ is also used in Acts 2:23 ‘Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain’. Note here the ‘foreknowledge’ is linked with the ‘determined counsel’ (which uses the Greek ‘*orizo*’ from ‘*proorizo*’ - the word for ‘predestination’). The ‘foreknowledge’ here is an extended explanation of the word before the conjunction ‘and’. It is an action of God as a result of His Purpose.

Who is choosing who here? Foreknowledge is not merely just a previous knowledge here. It is not only logical to have the two terms ‘foreknowledge’ and ‘foreordination’ as one in the mind of God, but as shown here (and in 1Peter 2,20), it is a scriptural reality.

Romans 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. 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’.

Again, there is no hint here that God’s foreknowledge was based on any act or decision by humans unless that be ‘read’ into the text and one *adds* to Scripture. Who or what is foreknown here? It is certainly not any ‘decision’ to choose Christ. What is foreknown here is *a person*. God foreknows the persons here, not any event or decision! Added to this is that all the actions are linked together and done by God (Greek Aorist indicative active), and even the ‘glorified’ is seen as already accomplished by Him. All the actions are done by God with man *passive*. If the first action of ‘foreknowledge’ is something based on something man does then all the links in the passage above fall apart, since all are being done by God. The foreknowledge view would destroy this by assuming that they are all the result of something man does.

This idea of man being active in God’s choosing is also refuted by Acts 13:48 where again the action is by God and man is passive: ‘And when the Gentiles

heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed'. Some modern Bible versions and Bible teachers have sadly turned this verse on its head to make man doing the action. But the Greek Perfect tense for 'ordained' describes an action or process that *took place in the past, the result of which has continued to the present*. The Greek passive 'voice' also represents *the subject as receiving the action of the verb*. God is doing the action and man is passive. Yet again, the foreknowledge argument is simply missing in this verse. The Gentiles believed here because they were 'ordained', which is really the opposite of the foreknowledge argument which would have them ordained as a subsequence of believing.

Romans 11:2

'God has not cast away His people which He foreknew...' This verse has God foreknowing 'his people' and 'all Israel shall be saved' (vs.26). Again there is no hint of that being accomplished following anything done by Israel as is proved beyond doubt by Old Testament scriptures stating clearly it was nothing that Israel had done or were as a people, but entirely an unconditional election by God (Dt.7:6-8; 10:15 Ps.135:4; Is.45:4).

Of the Greek word '*proginosko*' used for foreknowledge in many of these scriptures, Greek scholar Spiros Zodhiates states: '*In the language of Scripture, something foreknown is not simply that which God was aware of prior to a certain point. Rather, it is presented as that which God gave prior consent to, that which received His favourable or special recognition. Hence, this term is reserved for those matters which God favourably, deliberately and freely chose and ordained*'.

The scriptures are replete with the idea that God is sovereign in his determining what will happen. Nowhere in scripture can any exegesis of scripture show God foreseeing what man will do and then predestinating them to do so.

Romans 9:11-23

This passage is a rebuke to the foreknowledge argument at several levels. Here there is a sovereign choosing of Jacob over Esau, a choice based on nothing either had done - '*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 calls*'. To this a hypothetical objection is raised, '*Is there unrighteousness with God?*' (or '*Is God unfair?*'). This objection would not be raised unless true unconditional predestination and election was in view here, for nobody accuses the 'foreknowledge' view of being '*unfair*'! Paul answers the objection of God being unfair with: '*God forbid...I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion*' (vs.14,15).

The sovereignty of God in predestination, election and any choosing is then pressed further when God crushes the foreknowledge view with this: '*So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy*' (vs.16). Then, yet again the sovereignty of God in his choosing is pressed in

repetition: *‘Therefore has He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will he hardens’* (vs.18).

For those who continue to question God’s choosing as independent of any will of man, now comes a rebuke: *‘O man, who are you that reply against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?’* (vs.20,21).

How can the foreknowledge argument possibly fit in here? *Is the Potter dependent on what the clay can do of itself when it is the Potter alone who brings the clay to life?*

Conclusion

A decree as a result of a foreseen event is not true *predestination*. The logic of the foreknowledge argument is self defeating - how can God foresee if He does not also foreordain? Who determines a person’s salvation - is it God by a foreseen event of what man supposedly can do? If so, then who is the ‘author and the finisher’ of our salvation? Scriptures clearly show that the logic of the foreknowledge argument is actually based on something unsaved man *cannot* do (Eph.2:1; Eph.4:18)! Unsaved man cannot choose Christ in and of himself and is unable to understand spiritual things or be subject to the law (Rom.8:7,8; 1Cor.2:14). God’s quickening is needed to begin any such salvation (Jn.6:44,65). Thus the scriptures clearly link any foreknowledge with foreordination (1Pet.1:2,20; Acts 2:23).

What is at stake here is the sovereignty of God, one of the most important and over-arching doctrines in the Bible. The Bible speaks with much strength on this attribute of God: *‘that the living may know that the most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will, and sets up over it the basest of men...He does according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto him, What have you done’* (Dan 4:17,35)

‘I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure’ (Is.46:9,10).

Our logic and doctrine must be brought under the authority of scripture. We dare not question God’s predestination, election and choices by adding something man has to do before God can do of ‘His good pleasure’ (Eph.1:59).

Terry Arnold

(1) Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, P.679

(2) Barnes, Commentary on Romans 8:29

(3) AMG Word Study on ‘foreordained’ (KJV) in 1Peter 1:20

A Fresh Look at Revelation - Part 8

In **Part 1** (chapters 1-4 - *Diakrisis* July/August 2019) the intent was to show that the book of Revelation *is to be understood* at least as far as *what John saw and described*. *What is figurative and what is more literal can be determined with the language and referencing to other scriptures* ('scripture interprets scripture').

It is necessary to have studied the book of Daniel first, as much of Revelation is referenced in that book.

The *timing and the order of events* in the first three chapters are presented as events in John's day *with a divide in time and order at chapter 4* (see 1:19).

In **Part 2** (chapters 4,5 - *Diakrisis* September/October 2019) we continued to explore *what is 'literal' or 'figurative' and why*. This was done by searching the same *symbols, signs and wording* elsewhere.

In **Part 3** (chapters 6-8 - *Diakrisis* July/August 2020) we saw the first of three distinct judgements beginning with seven 'seals' (ch.6), all increasing in intensity.

In **Part 4** (chapters 8,9 - *Diakrisis* September/October 2020) we saw the second set of seven judgements begin *the Trumpet Judgements* and an increasing intensity in three last graphic 'woes'. A perfect God has a perfect judgement!

In **Part 5** (chapters 9,10 - *Diakrisis* November/December 2020) - The sixth trumpet judgement brings a more severe judgement - *death*. More than half the earth's population is now destroyed in divine judgements! The people left alive are unrepentant.

In **Part 6** (chapter 11 - *Diakrisis* January/February 2021) - the 'two witnesses' preach and the antichrist arises amidst signs and wonders the likes of which have never been seen before since the first coming of Christ.

In **Part 7** (Chapter 12 - *Diakrisis* March/April 2021) - Symbols, signs and figurative language refer to Israel and the great cosmic battle between God and evil. The war in heaven becomes a war on earth against God's elect nation and his saints. This chapter summarises a brutal and fearsome part of what is called the time of 'Jacob's Trouble'.

Part 8 - Chapter 13

'And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy'

In the midst of the chaos and disasters on the earth, now arises the man who is called by many names, but the one name which the world has been waiting for - is the 'antichrist'. The world will want a leader who promises peace. Antichrists

have come and gone before (1Jn.2:18; 4:3), but this ‘*beast*’ (‘*therion*’ - a wild lower beast) will be the last. He arises ‘*out of the sea*’. (The ‘*sea*’ here probably refers to the nations).

This ‘*beast*’ has ‘*seven heads*’ - seven empires as in chapter 17. Commentators believe these to be seven past kingdoms - Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo Persia, Greece, Rome, and antichrists final kingdom. Revelation 17:12 tells us the ‘*ten horns*’ are ten future kings. The ‘*crowns*’ are a symbol of royal dignity. The ‘*name of blasphemy*’ is a title that is against God, similar to many of the Roman Emperors who attached ungodly titles and slogans to their name.

Vs.2 ‘*And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority*’

These animals are similarly described in Daniel chapter 7 as Greece (leopard), Medo Persia (bear) and Babylon (lion). The antichrist’s final kingdom will be like all of these.

The ‘*dragon*’ works through, and gives ‘*power, his seat and great authority*’ to, the antichrist.

Vs.3,4 ‘*And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world [earth/land] wondered after the beast. And they worshiped the dragon which gave power [authority] unto the beast: and they worshiped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?*’

One of his ‘*heads*’ is ‘*wounded to death*’ but ‘*healed*’. It is debated as to whether this refers to a nation or a person. Verse 12 and 14 and also chapter 17:8,11 would arguably refer to a person being the ‘*beast*’ himself.

There are various interpretations of the statement ‘*wounded to death*’, but it does appear that the Antichrist here is either assassinated and is resurrected; or he is wounded in some way and recovers. It could well be a counterfeit sign. Whatever event this is, whether it be true or counterfeit, it will be a sign and wonder (vs.12-15) that will have the populace ‘*worship the dragon and the beast*’ with the saying ‘*who is like unto the beast [and] able to make war with him*’ - words that would be only for God himself (Ex.15:11).

Eventually the antichrist will ‘*oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God*’ (2Thess.2:4).

Vs.5,6 ‘*And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power [authority] was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven*’

The twice mentioned ‘*given unto him*’ here is God allowing the antichrist a period of time to speak ‘*great things and blasphemies*’ and to continue this for ‘*forty and two months*’ (3.5 years). This verse is identical to Daniel 7:8,25 and

11:36 in describing the *'little horn'* who will have a *'mouth speaking great things...great words against the most high, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time...and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods...'*

The *'time and times and the dividing of time'* is the same phrase found in Revelation 12:14 and also the same as the *'forty and two months'* (3.5 years - Rev.11:2; 13:5) and *'a thousand two hundred and threescore days'* (3.5 years - Rev.10:3; 12:6).

The sovereignty of God is seen here (as in Daniel) in His use of evil to bring to pass His Word (Rev.6:4; 7:2;9:5; Dan.4:17,25,32). The *'blasphemy'* is against God's *'name'*, His *'tabernacle'* and those with Him in His Heaven. The intent here is that of Satan himself whose desire is *'I will be like the most High'* (Is.14;14).

Vs.7 *'And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations'*

This will be a slaughter of the saints as depicted in several places in this book and in Daniel (Rev.6:9-11; 7:9-17; 17:6; Dan.7:25), and including those who most likely have come to salvation through the preaching of the 144,000 during the Time of *'Jacob's Trouble'*.

The antichrist may *'overcome'* the saints here physically, but never spiritually, for *'neither death, nor life...nor things to come...shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord'* (Rom.8:38,39).

Vs.8-10 *'And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leads into captivity shall go into captivity: he that kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints'*

The *'book of life'* belongs to *'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world'*. The names in it are those *'chosen before the foundation of the world'* (Eph.1:4; Rev.17:8). All those unsaved and not in that book will *'worship'* the antichrist, the first *'beast'*.

Many people will be slaughtered as is seen in the proverb here: *'He that leads into captivity shall go into captivity: he that kills with the sword must be killed with the sword'*. But they are to accept that this is God's will in this - *'Here is the patience and the faith of the saints'*, remembering that the saints killed will be seen in Heaven victorious (15:2-4).

Although the antichrist will wage *'war on the saints'* (Rev.11:7), God's admonition is *'Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator'* (1Pet.4:19).

Vs.11 ‘*And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon*’

The second ‘*beast*’ here is the final false prophet similar in nature to the first beast (the words ‘*another beast*’ uses the Greek ‘*allos*’ - ‘another of the same kind’). He is the agent for the antichrist and the last of all false prophets (Dt.13:1-5; 13:3,4; 18:22; Jer.23). As many false prophets do, he will come as if in ‘*sheeps clothing*’ (Matt.7:15).

Today we are plagued with false prophets in many churches who every day prophesy supposedly what God has said apart from, and extra to, the ‘*more sure word of prophecy...the prophecy of the scripture*’ (2Pet.1:19,20). These people and their churches are forerunners of the final false prophet!

This false prophet comes ‘*out of the earth*’ rather than ‘*out of the sea*’ as does the antichrist (vs.1). Many believe this to be the abyss and so this being would have demonic power. Others say it is out of a revived Roman empire.

This second beast has ‘*two horns like a lamb*’ - suggesting seemingly less harmful than the first beast, being a deceiver rather than a dictator like the antichrist.

Vs.12-14 ‘*And he exercises all the power of the first beast before him, and causes the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he does great wonders, so that he makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceives them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles [signs] which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live*’.

Despite this second beast being ‘*like a lamb*’, nevertheless, he will speak ‘*as a dragon*’ (vs.11) and thus ‘*exercise all the power of the first beast*’. His work is to cause all that ‘*dwell on the earth*’ to ‘*to worship the first beast*’. (‘*Dwell on the earth*’ is a phrase often used for the unsaved - vs.8,12; 3:10; 6:19).

He will persuade mankind with ‘*great wonders*’ and even ‘*fire from heaven*’. These ‘*miracles*’ (‘*signs*’) will be accompanied by the call to ‘*make an image*’ to the antichrist and worship him, just as Nebuchadnezzar did in the days of Daniel the prophet (Dan.3).

Today we already have a false gospel of signs and wonders and the prophesying of extra biblical words. But this false prophet will repeat and imitate Christ’s miracles and that of the magicians in Pharaoh’s court. Unlike most of the charlatans of today these signs may well be real and demonically inspired.

Vs.15-18 ‘*And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let*

him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six'.

'*The image of the beast*' here takes on a life of its own with a power to speak and cause the death of those who would not worship it, although not all on the world will die (at least one third of Israel will be alive in the end - Zech.13:8,9).

People from all classes '*both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond*' will be required to receive '*in their right hand or in their foreheads*' the '*mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name*' - without which none will be able to '*buy or sell*'. Thus there will be great pressure to take this 'mark'.

This word '*mark*' is the Greek '*cháragma*' meaning an engraving, or an impression or symbol. In the past many have scoffed at whether such events and such a mark could be taken literally. However, the technology for all this is already here and being used! This is another reason why a literal approach to the Bible interpretation must be taken more seriously today .

This in chapter 13:16 is the first mention of the '*mark*' of the beast which is further described in Revelation as '*a mark or the name*' (13:17); it being '*in the forehead or hand*' (14:9); that many in the '*vial*' (bowl) judgements will also receive an ulcerous '*sore*' who took the '*mark*' (16:2); all who receive it will finally suffer the '*wrath of God*' and be '*tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb*' in an eternal Hell (14:10,11; 19:20); but some who did not take the mark will have '*gotten the victory*' over the beast and this mark, and be seen in Heaven (15:2; 20:4).

There have been wild claims too numerous to mention as to what this 'mark' is, and too often found to be in error as time passes. However, we are exhorted to have '*wisdom*' and '*understand*' that it is '*the number of a man*' and that number is '666'.

If we were left to our own devices we would surely perish with the world, as described here in graphic terms in this chapter. '*For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*' (Rev.6:17).

But thanks and glory be to God '*For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also you do*' (1Thess.5:9-11).

Revelation chapter 13 is a stark warning to fear God; to proclaim the Gospel accurately; to keep his holy Word in doctrine and in practise. God's purpose is to '*deliver us from the wrath to come*' (1Thess.1:10).

The Grace which saves is the Grace which delivers. '*God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him*' (Rom.5:8,9).

Terry Arnold

Your Comments and Questions

(Views expressed here are not necessarily those of the editor)

Terry, I have been questioning what Ephesians 2:8,9 is saying when it refers to 'the gift of God'. Many say it is referring to Faith...I don't think it is either Faith or Grace. The 'gift' ('doron') refers to Sacrifice...So in Eph.2:8 the 'Gift of God'...refers to the Gift (sacrifice) of Jesus Christ His Son, that God himself offered as a lamb to be sacrificed for our sin so we can obtain salvation by Grace through Faith, these being gifts also...

(R.D. Qld)

Editor's reply (excerpts only):

[I have a full three page overview on this for any who would like to enquire deeper than we can only briefly do here for space]

'For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast'

There are differing views in how scholars see '*the gift of God*' here. Does the '*gift of God*' in this verse refer to '*faith*' or to the '*grace of salvation*'; or to the *whole salvation* process?...My undogmatic persuasion is as follows...

An exegesis would need to include word studies; other scriptures ('scripture interprets scripture') and a study of the grammatical context.

Scriptures: A search of '*the gift of God*' usually points to Christ, his Grace or salvation and eternal life (Jn.4:10; Acts 8:20; Rom.6:23; 2Tim.1:6), rather than 'faith' on its own. 2Corinthians 9:15 speaks of God's unspeakable gift which is Jesus Christ. The word here for 'gift' is never used of faith but is used with salvation in many verses. In Romans 5:15-18 the '*gift of God*' is linked with 'grace', 'justification' and 'righteousness', rather than 'faith'. There are many such passages which link this 'gift' or 'free gift' to grace and *salvation* - eternal life (Rom.6:23). (Some might point to 1Corinthians 12:9 where it speaks of a gift of faith. But that faith is not saving faith but a miraculous gift from the Holy Spirit).

Arguably the conclusion would be that if the '*gift of God*' in Ephesians 2:8 would point to the 'faith' only, then it would be an exception rather than the rule. This is not to say that there is no faith in salvation by Grace, for certainly faith is the *vehicle* by which grace comes (ie. '*through faith*'). However, I see it best not to isolate 'Faith' from the 'Grace' and the whole salvation, since faith is the *vehicle* by which the Grace of salvation comes.

The real question to be addressed is - to what is Paul referring when he says that something is '*not of ourselves*', but is a '*gift of God*', not resulting from any man's works, so that no man can boast? The main point in the Ephesian 2 passage is *salvation* and this is shown by the reference to what it is of, and what it is not of. It is by Grace alone; it is *not* anything in and 'of yourselves' including 'not of works'. In other words *the entire salvation process which includes faith is the 'gift of God'*. He is the '*author and the finisher of faith*' (Heb.12:2)

The Greek Grammar: The pronoun *'that'* is 'demonstrative' - it points to the thing that is referred to. Whatever *'that'* is, it is a 'gift' of God. The standard Greek rule is that the *'that'* would normally match in *gender* (masculine, feminine, neuter) and number (plural, singular first, second or third person) with an 'antecedent' that has gone before it. The problem is that in our passage *'faith'* (*'pistis'* - feminine) does not agree with the antecedent *'that'* (*'touto'* - neuter) in *gender*. But also in the first phrase - *'by grace you have been saved through faith'* - grammatically nothing matches either. We are left with only one answer to this: *the neuter demonstrative pronoun 'this' (or 'that') takes in the entire preceding clause*. My view here is that the whole clause of *grace and faith in salvation* to be the 'gift' of God.

There is also the question of the phrase *'not of works'*. Justification and righteousness is not of works (Rom.3:20,27,28; 4:2,6; 9:32 Gal.2:16), election is not of works (Rom.9:11), and salvation is not of works (2Tim.1:9; Tit.3:5). But faith is never said to be not of works. The conclusion is again that the 'of ourselves' and the 'not of works' is referring back to *salvation*. God's 'gift' of salvation must be received personally and by faith in whom the Lord Jesus Christ is and what he has done on our behalf to satisfy God for our sin.

[Please see our PDF document on this for all these points expanded].

*****Conference (Sydney)*****

September 25th (Saturday) St.Johns Park Baptist. 9.30am - 4.30pm
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