

CHOSEN BY GOD?

What does Jesus mean when He said: “*Many be called, but few chosen*” (CP Mt 20:16 (KJV); “*No man can come to me, except the Father who sent me draw him*” (CP Jn 6: 37,44); “*You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you*” (CP Jn 15:16); “*I pray not for the world, but for those which thou hast given me*” (CP Jn 17:9). What did Luke mean when he said; “*As many as were ordained to eternal life believed*” (CP Ac 13:48). What did Paul mean when he said; “*For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate*” (CP Ro 8:29); “*Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy and whom He will He hardeneth*” (CP Ro 9:18); “*According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world*” (CP Eph 1:4). What did Peter mean when he said; “*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*” (CP 1Pe 1:12).

These sayings are used by some in the contemporary church to teach that Christians have been individually chosen by God to be saved. But that is not correct, as scriptures clearly teach. Jesus’ saying that “many be called, but few chosen” in Mt 20:16 – which is not recorded in most modern versions of the Bible, but is in Mt 22:14, which we will look at in a moment – is Jesus’ closing statement in His parable of the labourers in the vineyard (CP Mt 20:1-16). Jesus teaches here that while the call to salvation is a universal call – it includes every human being (CP Mt 11:28; Jn 7:37-38; Rev 22:17) – only those who respond affirmatively to the call and conform strictly to the conditions Jesus has laid down for salvation are chosen to inherit the future eternal kingdom (CP Mt 22:2-14). This is called the parable of the marriage feast. It teaches that within Christendom there are many professing Christians who will not inherit the future eternal kingdom. They have answered God’s call to salvation – like the wedding guests in the parable accepted the king’s invitation to the marriage feast – but on their terms, not Christ’s. This is symbolized by the wedding guest in the parable refusing to put on the wedding garment. Wearing the wedding garment and being yielded to the king’s authority in the parable typifies Christians being totally consecrated to the service of God, and completely yielded to the authority of Jesus.

These are the conditions Christ has laid down for salvation, and no one can enter into His future eternal kingdom on any other terms. That is what Jesus meant when He said that many be called, but few chosen. The chosen are not individuals specially chosen by God to be saved, but those who by personal choice believe in Christ and obey His commands (CP Jn 3:16-18, 36). There are two truths illustrated by the parable of the marriage feast: one is that as the king called everyone to the marriage of His son, so too God calls everyone to partake of the kingdom benefit of His Son – Jesus, and like the call to the marriage feast, no one is excluded from responding to God’s call. Sadly though, and this is the second truth the parable of the marriage feast illustrates, not all who respond to God’s call to salvation are totally consecrated to the service if God and completely yielded to the authority of Jesus (CP Mt 5:19-20; 7:21-27; Lu

13:22-30). The chosen in Mt 20:16 are those who by choice have received Christ as saviour and conform strictly to the conditions He has laid down for salvation. They constitute the glorious church, which is what God foreordained before the foundation of the world, not the individual members of the church (CP Eph 1:3-5, 9-10; 3:1-11; 2Ti 1:1, 8-10).

Now let us look at what Jesus means when He said that no man can come to Him, except the father draw him. This too has to be kept in context for its true meaning to become apparent (CP Jn 6:37, 44-45, 64-65). The simple teaching here is that everyone who listens to and learns from God, will come to, and believe in Jesus. This reflects the fact that all believers are the Father’s gift to the Son who died for them (CP Psa 2:7-8; 33:12; Ro 8:29). Jesus quotes from the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah in Jn 6:45 (CP Jer 31:34). When kept in context it is clear that Jesus is not teaching in Jn 6:37 and 44 that God acts sovereignly and chooses who will be saved. If He did then all these scriptures which teach that salvation is the personal choice of the individual are meaningless (CP De 30:11-19; Josh 24:15; 2Chr 15:2; Isa 45:22; 55:1-7; Eze 18:20-30; 33:10-20; Joel 2:32; Mt 11:28-30; 12:47-50; Jn 3:14-17, 36; 5:24; 6:35, 40, 47; 7:17,37-39; Ac 2:21,37-39; 10:34-35,43; 13:47-48; 16:30-34; 17:30-31; Ro 1:16-18; 4:5-25; 10:8-17; 1Cor 1:21; 8:3; Ga 3:7-9; Col 1:3-6; 1Ti 2:1-6; He 5:9; 1Pe 2:6-9; 2Pe 3:9; 1Jn 2:2; Rev 21:6; 22:17). Those scriptures all teach that God’s call to salvation is an open invitation to all who hear the call. God has not already chosen who will be saved. They choose for themselves whether they want to be saved or not (CP Jn 3:36). The word *believeth* here is from the Greek word **Pistueo**, which means to place confidence in, to trust, to be persuaded of. It implies obedience to as a moral choice. *Believeth not* is from the Greek word **Apeitheo**, which means refuse to be persuaded, refuse to believe, refuse to obey. Thus “*he that believeth*” is He who chooses to believe whereas “*he that believeth not*” is he who chooses not to believe, or who refuses to obey. This is irrefutable proof that salvation is the personal choice of the individual and that God does not intervene in any way (CP Jn 15:16).

Jesus is not teaching here either that Christians have been individually chosen for salvation. Salvation is not in view here. Jesus is simply referring to His choice of Christians as those He has appointed to go and bring forth fruit for the eternal kingdom (CP Jn 15: 4-5; Eph 2:10; Col 1:1-6, 10). Every Christian has been ordained by God to go and bring forth fruit for the kingdom (CP Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16; 1Cor 3:6-9; 2Cor 5:18-20). *Fruit* in the context of Jn 15:16 means souls won to Christ (CP Jn 4:34-37; 12:24; Ro 1:13-16; Col 1:3-6). Jn 15:16 has nothing whatever to do with how Christians are saved, but rather, to whether or not they bear fruit for the kingdom (CP Jn 15:1-8). In V2 here Jesus warns Christians of the dangers of not bearing fruit for His kingdom. In V4-5, He is teaching Christians that their fruitfulness is a result of His life being reproduced in them, but they must abide, or remain in Him to be fruitful. In V7, Jesus asserts that conditional upon remaining in Him Christians can ask whatever they desire in prayer and it will be given to them. In V8 we learn that God is glorified in the answered prayers of fruitful Christians. Clearly Jesus’

statement in Jn 15:16 that Christians did not choose Him, but He chose them, is not about salvation, but about being fruitful for God (CP Eph 2:10).

Now to Jn 17:9 (CP 17:9) *Them which those hast given me* again does not mean that Christians are predestined for salvation by God. As we learned in our study on Jn 6:37, 44-45, 64-65, when Jesus said that no man can come to Him except the father draw him, it simply reflects the fact that all Christians are God's gift to Jesus who died for them. Let us look at those scriptures again which teach this (CP Jn 6:37, 44-45, 64-65 with Psa 2:7-8; 33:12).

In Ac 13:48 when talking about repentant sinners believing in Christ under Paul and Barnabas' ministry in Antioch, Luke made the statement that as many as were ordained to salvation believed (CP Ac 13:48). This scripture is used by some in the contemporary church to promote the teaching that God sovereignly chooses those who will be saved. But again that is not correct as has been clearly shown throughout this study. It also contradicts the plain teaching of V46 that salvation is a free-will choice (CP Ac 13:46-47). This teaches that the Jews, of their own volition, rejected the gospel of Christ and chose not to accept the salvation benefits which God has ordained for mankind through Christ. So God then took the gospel to the Gentiles, who received it gladly, and were saved. *Ordained* in this context means *disposed*. The Gentiles were disposed to eternal life and believed. Thus they were saved. If God has specially chosen individuals for salvation, He would contravene His own word and be a respecter of persons (CP Ac 10:34-35; Ro 2:10-13; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25; 1Pe 1:17). God is no respecter of persons and therefore has not sovereignly decided for any man's salvation. It is solely the choice of the individual.

Let us look now at Ro 8:29 which is also used to teach that God predestines those who are saved to salvation. Again that is not correct, which is plainly evident when the scripture is kept in context (CP Ro 8:28-30). This is one of the most debated passages of scripture in Christendom. V28 is generally used to teach that God works through every circumstance of life for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. And this is a valid teaching in line with other scriptures. However, in the context of Ro 8, V28-30 refers to the church – *Them that love God ... Them who are called according to His purpose* – being predestinated by God to be called and ultimately glorified with Jesus in eternity (CP Ro 8:16-18; 1Cor 1:21; Ga 4:4-7; Eph 1:3-14; 2:4-7; 3:1-12; Col 1:12-22; 2Ti 1:8-10; 4:8; Tit 2:11-14; 3:3-7; He 2:9-10; 5:9; 1Pe 2:6-10; 1Jn 5:11-12). This is the *good* that all things work together for in God's eternal purpose, to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. God has predestinated the church to future glory with Jesus. *According to His purpose* refers to God's eternal purpose in Jesus as the saviour through whom His plan of redemption for mankind would be accomplished. God has predetermined that all who accept Christ as saviour will be saved. The conjunction *for* in Ro 8:29 underlines the assurance of V 28 that God's eternal purpose will

be worked out in those who love Him. He will conform them to the image of Jesus (CP Php 2:12-13; 2Th2:13-14; 2Ti 1:12; 1Jn 3:1-3).

Many in the contemporary church believe that Ro 8:29 refers to God sovereignly choosing certain ones from among mankind (and thus rejecting others), but as we learned in our study on Ac 13:48, God is no respecter of persons – He would not choose one to be saved over another. God has universally called everyone to salvation and has undertaken to save all who of their own free will, under conviction by the Holy Spirit, respond affirmatively to His call (CP De 3:15-18; Isa 1:16-20; 8:13-15; 45:22; 55:1-7; Joel 2:32; Mt 11:28-30; Jn 3:16-18, 36, 6:27, 35, 40, 47, 51-54; 7:37-38; 8:12; 10:9; Ac 2:21; Ro 10:9-13; Rev 21:6; 22:17). *Whom He did foreknow* simply means that God foreknows those who accept Jesus Christ as their saviour, and He predestines them to future glory with Jesus. God did not predestine them to salvation. They chose to be saved themselves. Predestination does not even refer to salvation in scripture, but to the future of those who are saved and comprise the church (CP Eph 3:1-21). When repentant sinners, under conviction by the Holy Spirit, accept Christ as their saviour they are called by God into the church. Then they are justified and at the future resurrection of the just, they will be glorified (CP Ro 8:16-19, 30). The divine order is first, foreknowledge; second, predestination; third, calling or election; fourth, justification or salvation, and finally, glorification. This is the divine order in God's redemptive plan, and to alter it or teach it in any other order is false doctrine.

We will now look at Paul's saying in Ro 9:18 that God will have mercy on whom He will and whom He will He hardens (CP Ro 9:18). Many in the contemporary church believe that this means that salvation is prepared for those only on whom God is pleased to bestow his mercy, and that ruin and damnation awaits all whom He has not chosen. This teaching is just as fallacious as the others in this study. Let us see what it really means (CP V1-3). Paul expresses his heaviness of heart and continual sorrow here for the Jewish nation being cut off from God (CP Ro 10:1-3; 11:1-5). This may seem to have no bearing on the subject matter of this study, but it needs to be noted here that the very fact that Paul prayed for the Jews to be saved reflects God's will for all mankind throughout scripture, and further refutes the teaching that God chooses those who are saved (CP Jer 13:17; Eze 18:30-32; 33:11; Mt 11:28-30; Ro 2:4; 2Pe 3:9). The plain teaching of scripture is that individuals determine their own destination in eternity – whether it be heaven or hell (CP Jn 3:18, 36). God has not predetermined any man's eternal destination (CP Ro 9:10-13). What God predetermined concerning Jacob and Esau had nothing whatsoever to do with salvation. God chose Jacob over Esau in order for His eternal purpose to be fulfilled in the earth. That is what the phrase; *That the eternal purpose of God according to election might stand* in V11 means. God purposed that Messiah – Jesus – would come from the nation of Israel to fulfill His redemptive plan (CP Gen 49:10; Mic 5:2; Mt 2:3-6; Lu 2:11). Israel was one of two nations - the twins - in Rebecca's womb, and was represented by Jacob (CP Gen 32:20-32). The other nation was Edom, represented by Esau (CP Gen 36:1, 9, 40-43). God's

rejection of Esau had nothing to do with Esau's eternal destiny. Esau chose his own destiny just as we all choose ours (CP De 30:15-20; Jn 3:16-18; Ro 1:16). The story of Jacob and Esau has nothing whatever to do with the personal salvation of individuals. Paul told the story simply to illustrate the fact that God chooses to save by grace, not by works, and that the purpose of God according to election, will be on His terms alone. Works will have no part in it (CP Ro 3:27-30; 4:1-5; 5:8-11, 17-21; 11:6; 2Cor 5:14-21; Eph 2:4-22; 1Pe 2:24). Ro 9:13 does not mean that God literally hated Esau, and loved Jacob (CP 9:13). *Hated* as used here is an idiom of preference, not a term expressing literal hatred toward someone. Jesus used the word as an idiom of preference too (CP Mt 10: 37-38; Lu 14:25-27).

Paul's consideration in Ro 9 is the question of Israel's relationship to God. While Paul affirms that God as a sovereign creator is free to order all things as He pleases, he is not teaching, as is plainly evident in our study of V10-13, that God is arbitrary or capricious in His dealings with men (CP Ro 9:14-15). The cause of Israel being rejected by God was not due to God exercising His sovereignty over Israel, but to Israel's unbelief and disobedience (CP Jn 1:11; 3:19; 5:39-40; Ac 13:44-46; 28:23-28; Ro 9:30-33; 10:17-21; 11:13-24; 2Cor 3:12-16).

Now let us see what Paul meant when he said in Ro 9:18 that God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and whom He wills He hardens (CP V16-18). In V16 Paul is simply saying that salvation is not a matter of human desire or effort – working to be found worthy is futile. God justifies persons by grace through faith in Christ while they are still sinners (CP Ro 9:16 with 5:8-11 and Eph 2:8-9). The terminology of Ro 9:17-18 derives from the hardening of Pharaoh's heart prior to the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt in the Old Testament (CP V17-18 with Ex 4:21; 7:3, 13-14; 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:4, 8). We see in all these scriptures that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is attributed to God. However, elsewhere in the book of Exodus it is attributed to Pharaoh himself (CP Ex 7:22-23; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 34-35; 13:15). These scriptures have all been used to teach that God made it impossible for the Jews to believe because He had already determined not to save them. But that is incorrect. As saw earlier, the Jews rejected the Gospel of their own volition and it is for that reason alone that God rejected them. And the same thing applied to Pharaoh. Pharaoh's stubborn resistance to God was the same as the Jews to Jesus. And when God said He would harden Pharaoh's heart that does not mean that He caused Pharaoh's heart to harden, rather, He permitted it. Many times in scripture God is said to do the things He permits to be done (CP Isa 6:9-10 with Mt 13:10-15; Mk 4:11-12; Lu 8:9-10; Jn 12:37-40; Ro 11:7-8).

Now to find out what Paul meant when he said in Eph 1:4 that God had chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world (CP Eph 1:3-6). Those in the church who teach that God is sovereign in the matter of salvation claim this scripture proves that no one can be saved without being predestined to

salvation by God. Again though, that teaching contradicts all that God Himself teaches in His word. It denies that God's redemptive plan provides for all men, which makes a mockery of Christ's death on the cross, rendering it efficacious only for a select few. Yet scriptures are clear that Christ died for all men (CP Mt 11:28-30; Jn 1:29; 3:14-16; 2Cor 5:14-15, 18-19; Eph 2:11-18; 1Ti 2:1-4; 1Jn 2:2; Rev 22:17). The teaching that no one can be saved unless God has predestined them to salvation, implies that God plays games with the souls of men by calling them all to repent yet knowing all the while that only those He has predestined to salvation will be saved (CP Eze 14:6; 18:30-32; Mt 3:2; 4:17; Mk 1:15; 6:12; Lu 13:3, 5; Ac 2:38). God does not play games with the souls of men. He has not already determined for or against anyone's salvation. His plan is the same for all men – everyone is invited to avail themselves of His offer to save them on the sole basis of their individual choice and conformity to His plan of redemption (CP De 30:19-20; 2Chr 15:2; Isa 45:22; 55:6-7; Eze 18:21-30; 33:13-20; Joel 2:32; Jn 1:6-7, 12; 3:14-15, 19-21; 5:24; 6:27; Ac 2:21; 10:34-35; Ro 1:16; 10:13; 1Cor 1:21; 8:3; Ga 3:7-9; 1Th 1:1-10; He 5:9; 2Pe 3:9; Rev 21:6; 22:17). Every living soul is given the opportunity to be saved as a free will choice if they want to be. But they have to choose God. He does not choose them (CP 1Pe 1:2).

The foreknowledge of God here simply refers to the fact that God saw ahead that He would have to send a saviour to redeem mankind from Adam's fall, and He predetermined a plan for man's redemption and the saviour through whom it would be accomplished – the Lord Jesus Christ (CP Gen 3:15; Nu 24:7; Psa 22; 118:22; Isa 7:14; 9:6-7; 28:16; 49:1-8; 50:2-11; 52:13; 53:12; Zech 13:6-7; Mt 1:18-25; Lu 1:26,35,68-75; 2:25-38; 24:25-27,44-48; Jn 1:29; Ro 1:1-6; 16:25-27; Ga 4:4-5; Eph 3:9-12; 2Ti 1:1,8-10; He 10:1-10; 1Pe 1:18-20; 2:6-8; Rev 13:8). Some in the contemporary church claim that Rev 13:8 teaches that the names of those whom God has predestined to salvation have been written in the Lamb's book of life from the foundation of the world. But it is not teaching that at all. The clear teaching is that it was the atoning death of Christ for the redemption of mankind that God predestined from the foundation of the world, exactly as all the other scriptures teach. *Elect* according to the foreknowledge of God in 1Pe 1:2 refers to all those who chose Jesus as their Saviour in obedience to God's redemptive plan for the human race through Christ's atoning death (CP 1Pe 1:3-12, 18-20 with Jn 3:14-17; Ro 3:21-26; Eph 1:3-13; 2:4-10; 3:1-12; 2Th 2:13-14; Tit 1:1-3; 2:11-14; He 2:9-14).

There is no teaching anywhere in scripture to validate any claim that Christians are individually chosen by God for salvation. Although God foreknows who will, and who will not be saved, only those who put their faith in Christ are predestined to salvation. They are the few that be chosen in Mt 20:16 and 22:14. They are the ones that can only come to Jesus because God draws them in Jn 6:37 and 44. They are the ones chosen by Jesus in Jn 15:16. They were the ones disposed to eternal life who believed, in Ac 13:48. They are the called according to God's purpose in Ro 8:28, and the ones God foreknew and predestinated in Ro 8:29. They are the ones upon whom God will have

mercy in Ro 9:18. They were chosen in God before the foundation of the world in Eph 1:4, and last but not least, they are the elect according to the foreknowledge of God in 1Pe 1:2. Their election to salvation is conditional upon their personal living faith in Jesus, and perseverance in union with Him (CP Mt 10:22; 24:13; Mk 13:13; Rev 3:12). In God's eternal purpose election is grounded in Christ's sacrificial death on Calvary's cross (CP Ac 20:28; Ro 3:24-26). Election is God's choice of a people in Christ for Himself. It refers to the church as a divinely ordained spiritual institution, and pertains to every person, Jew and Gentile alike who conforms to God's plan of redemption. Election is primarily corporate and embraces individuals only in association and identification with the church (CP Psa 22:22; Isa 42:1-6; Ro 3:21-26; Eph 1:3-13; 2:4-10; 3:1-12; 2Th 2:13-14; Tit 1:1-3; 2:11-14; He 2:9-13; 1Pe 2:3-9). It is the church that has been predestined to salvation and those who make up the church are the chosen ones of God, and it is only in this sense that it can be said that they have been

chosen. Those who teach that Christians have been individually chosen for salvation are teaching error. Individuals choose for themselves if they want to be saved. It is their choice, not God's.

To sum up in closing this study, we could say that calling and predestination are analogous of a great ship on its way to heaven. The ship (the church) is chosen by God to be His very own vessel. Christ is the captain and pilot of this ship. All who desire to be a part of this elect ship and captain can do so through a living faith in Christ, by which they come on board the ship. As long as one is on the ship in company with its captain, he is among the elect. If he chooses to abandon the ship and captain, he ceases to be one of the elect. Calling is always about the ship's destination and what God had prepared for those remaining on it. God invites everyone to come aboard the elect ship through faith in Christ. (Analogy by courtesy of **Life in the Spirit Study Bible** – formerly **Full Life Study Bible** – P1860-1861).