

# Preselected to Receive a Special Offer?

## God's Salvation Is Good for Everyone

Salvation by predestination fosters an image of God as a dishonest sovereign who misleads humanity with bogus invitations to enjoy eternal life, if they live for Him now, all while He is fully aware that He has predestined only a select few for salvation.

Millard J. Erickson, a theologian, says, "Predestination refers to God's choice of individuals for eternal life or eternal death." So sometime in the past, long before Adam's fall, God predetermined the fate of humanity. The theory would have you believe that even before God had said "Let there be light," He had already preselected those who would be saved and, by default, those who would be lost. But does the Bible support this concept?

Amazingly, under predestination, how we live our lives has no bearing on our final and eternal destination. The idea of predestination, then, removes the need for living a faithful, obedient life. Indeed, since God has already predestined each of us either to burn in the lake of fire or to walk the streets of gold, it would be pointless for anyone who has not been prechosen for salvation to repent, to be baptized, or to live for Jesus, given that they are lost already, because of a decision made by God in the distant past while man's appearance on the earth was yet future.

If any of this were true, how fair and just would God be? Imagine, God encouraging us to go through the motions of being saved, all while knowing that our fate was sealed before birth. Thus, we have no chance in heaven of turning away from hell.

Believing this requires us to dismiss all that God's Word has to say about the hope that is ours through Jesus. Indeed, we would need to accept that there is no hope for those already predestined by God for eternal damnation. This myth's origins can be traced to a misinterpretation of Paul's letters. For example, Romans 8:29, 30: "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. . . . Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called." A surface reading of the passage might easily contribute to the notion of predestination. But ask yourself: Does God's foreknowledge indicate His preselection of those being saved and those being lost? Not according to His Word.

Further confusing the issue, for some, are Paul's statements in Ephesians 1:5 ("having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself") and Ephesians 1:11 ("being predestined according to the purpose of Him"). Is the apostle's repeated use of the word "predestined" his way of telling us that salvation comes only to those predetermined by God for salvation, leaving all others to be lost?

No, there is no biblical support for this misconception. Embracing the

concept of predestination necessarily requires one to deny that God gave us free will by which we choose to worship Him or not. Without a free will, Joshua would not have needed to declare, “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve” (Joshua 24:15). Furthermore, if God has predetermined who is saved and who is lost, what was the point of the cross? And why send Jesus to endure the shame and the pain?

Based on a lack of any support in the Bible, we know the doctrine of predestination is not biblical. And we know God has not predestined just a few to be saved, because we have His Word on it. Indeed, look closely again at the words of Paul in Romans 8:29: “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined.”

We need only ask, how many has God foreknown? Every one of us. As He told Jeremiah, “I knew you in your mother’s womb” (see Jeremiah 1:5).

Meanwhile, the Bible is filled with wonderful, *inclusive* promises of life eternal for all who desire to have it. In fact, the Bible helps us to know that salvation is not the exclusive gift for a select few:

- Second Peter 3:9 reminds us that God is “not willing that any should perish but that *all* should come to repentance.”
- Jesus shares in Matthew 11:28: “Come to Me, *all* you who labor and are heavy laden.”
- Second Corinthians 5:19 says that “God was in Christ reconciling the *world* to Himself.”
- Paul writes in Titus 2:11: “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to *all* men.”
- And, without question, John 3:16 helps us to recognize that there’s room at God’s table for everyone: “For God so loved the *world* that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whoever* believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Contrary to the myth of predestination, we shall not be saved or lost because God predetermined our fate. We shall be saved because by grace we *chose* to have a faith relationship with Him through Jesus Christ our Lord. We have His Word on it.