

AS A HOUSE BUILT ON SAND?

DOCTRINES OF ELECTION
and PREDESTINATION



Gerrie Malan

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Special Enhanced PDF Edition

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ISBN Number: 978-0-9922373-1-8

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although I am the author, the creation of this book belongs as much to my wife, Martie, as it does to me. The preface provides more background as to where it all started and the role she has played in its creation. I was spared many hours of work through her research, discussions and listing of relevant portions of the Bible.

My twenty five year career as a correctional official placed huge demands on my family, as we had to endure several transfers during the children's school years. I therefore dedicate this book to our three elect, Gerrit and Ruan, our two sons, and Petru, our daughter.

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PREFACE

A few years ago an Afrikaans singer cum writer openly declared the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination or election was the dividing essence between him and the Christian church. He could not believe in a God who was seemingly so unfair that He would predestine some for salvation and some for damnation. I had never taken the man seriously, having always perceived him as a rebel who seemed to be unhappy and dissatisfied with about everything and everyone that came along his way. But perhaps I did not give the singer's statement much thought at the time simply because I had personally never really given this doctrine any thought.

At home, Martie, my wife and a girl who, like me, was raised in a Calvinistic Reformed church tradition, started to speak out on her growing, different understanding of the matter of the concept of Election in the New Testament writings. Then I read a blog post on the topic of predestination, election, and the argument of Romans 9. The blogger was a younger man whose understanding and responsible approach to teaching of the Bible I had come to appreciate (despite disagreeing with him in a number of areas) and to whose regular newsletter I subscribed. Martie's understanding was very different to that which the blog debate produced. Lights came on and I realised that I could no longer remain indifferent to what she was saying. I simply had to embark on a deeper study of this core doctrine (or doctrines) and this book is the result of that study to which she contributed much in the way of research.

Martie and I have no desire to be controversial, but we realise at the same time that the understanding we have formed from this study may have the potential to be just that. Religious tradition, we have found over and over again, is a hard shell to break through, whether Reformed, Pentecostal, Charismatic, or whatever tradition may be at hand.

As we have done in other writings, what is presented in this book is made in a quest for the pure biblical truth; a desire to rightly divide the Word of Truth. I therefore do not present this understanding of the Scriptures in a spirit of “*this is how it is and that settles it,*” but **purely as my understanding**. In the process I try to illustrate the **what, how** and **why** of that understanding. It always remains the reader’s own responsibility to decide what he or she believes the Scriptures are truly stating. My attitude constantly seeks to be one of encouraging all to follow the pure Berean approach as the biblical way to receive and carefully test what I (and others) present. This approach requires us all to follow sound principles of interpretation, always guarding against a natural tendency to read into the Scriptures what one’s traditions or experiences may have embedded in your mind.

We see in Acts 17:11 that the Bereans measured Paul’s word by the Scriptures and not the Scriptures by Paul’s word

Paul sounded another principle in his first letter to the Corinthians (Chapter 4:6), that one should not read above what is written. To apply this to ourselves today: We should not read into the Scriptures to say what it had never intended to convey. In other words, **the Scriptures should be read within the uncluttered and unpolluted context of the original audiences and recipients**. This is a principle far too many preachers and teachers of our day sadly ignore all too often.

Centuries of theology rooted in and built by means of principles and techniques of philosophy has robbed us in our lifetime of clear and experiential knowledge of the true and simple Gospel that Jesus of Nazareth and His first apostles taught. The many bulky books on the interpretation of the Scriptures leave one with the distraught feeling that what was originally intended to be the means to an end had long ago become the end in itself. Instead of helping the Bible student to understand the simple truths and meanings recorded for us by the writers of the Bible, and then to live according to those messages, we often battle to understand even the books on (the ‘art’ of) interpretation.

Samuel Lee, a former professor in Arabic and Hebrew at the University of Cambridge commenced the preface to his book on eschatology in 1859 with the following paragraph:

Early in his ministry, the writer attempted to gain some definite views on the subject presented in this volume. He consulted authors, and especially commentators. The effect was “confusion worse confounded.” He then, as the only hope, went directly and alone to the volume of Inspiration, and attempted to study the Scriptures scripturally; to make the Bible its own interpreter.

This remains the primary foundation for me too. It is in this spirit that I invite you to walk alongside me on this journey through various nuances of a prominent, core doctrine that has caused much confusion, pain and even death to so many people throughout the centuries. Of all Christian doctrines the Doctrine of Predestination or Election is perhaps the one that has been both misunderstood and abused the most, sometimes even for the sake of political expediencies.

This is not an anti-Calvinism book, for there is much good to be learned from Calvin. My point of departure for the study has not been to prove or disprove any predestination doctrines. Instead, I (and my wife too) have studied the Bible portions that either directly include words such as elect, chose, ordained and predestinated, or are generally used in interpretations and conclusions that present the predestination concept, in order to

come to our own understanding of the original and authentic biblical meaning. Only after forming our understanding in this way, did we move to weighing it against the traditional doctrines in the church environment. It was inevitable in doing so that I would have to provide core information on various aspects of the traditional predestination doctrines as well in explaining my understanding against those centuries old perspectives for a proper knowledge base.

I have no doubt that my conclusion of who the Elect is (or rather was?) is not new. Still, it will come as a surprise to many. In the end, however, I believe it presents a clear and simple understanding of the original meaning of the Scriptures. Most certainly, it remains the reader's privilege to differ. As always I maintain that any real reward for me does not lie in an unquestioned agreement with all I write, but in the knowledge that the reader has been encouraged to closely examine the Scriptures to see if these things were indeed so. Let the richness of the Word immerse your soul.

May Abba Father bless you in your own search for an understanding of His truth.

Grace to you.

Gerrie Malan

Hibberdene

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20 October 2017

INTRODUCTION

“Everywhere there is apathy. Nobody cares whether that which is preached is true or false. A sermon is a sermon whatever the subject; only, the shorter the better” (Charles Spurgeon).

Paul warned his young protégé, Timothy, against the danger coming from false teachers, urging him to rightly divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). The New Jerusalem Bible rendering of Paul’s advice is that Timothy was to keep the message of truth on a straight path. False teachers aside, if any preacher, teacher or writer of Christendom today should be teaching doctrines that may be rooted in wrong understanding or interpretation, however sincere the heart or constructive the message may be, where then are we to draw the line as to what the Bible truly teaches? What measure of deviance from the accurate truth that was written would be tolerable or acceptable and what not? Using biblical terminology to describe one’s understanding of a topic does not necessarily make it biblically accurate.

Between denominations, theologians and comparative religionists there are considerable disagreements about which groups can properly be called Christian, **disagreements arising primarily from doctrinal disagreements between groups** (Wikipedia, 2010; my accentuation).

With this in mind, we can continue our journey through the Bible, while weighing this most foundational group of doctrines that are preached from church pulpits throughout the world, against the Scriptures. Sadly, doctrines and sermons often suffer to such a large extent from the stains of ancient pagan Greek culture and philosophy, that they have been and still are robbing

us of the simple, yet profound power of the true Gospel message and the Kingdom life here and now, that should have reflected in our daily life, both as individuals and communities. No wonder the world is so cynical of the Christian church and the Bible.

Many of the sceptics either come from a ‘cultural’ Christian background, or have read portions of the Bible, admittedly from their own (even outspoken atheist) perspective. However, one cannot deny that there is too often little correlation between what they read, what they learned from history, and what they see around them. Then Christian believers pollute the matter even more by trying to convince them of the biblical ‘truth’ with the same misplaced and over spiritualised approaches we have been indoctrinated with from childhood. (For more on the realities of philosophical approaches to the Scriptures, please see the Annexure).

The Oxford Dictionary (1995: 432) describes doctrine as something that is taught; a body of instruction. It is also described as a principle of religious or political belief; a set of such principles. Doctrines (or dogmas) are supposedly to help us understand things that we cannot find so clearly in the Bible (Hoddenbaugh, 2011). In view of the confusion we are so widely confronted with, it becomes even more critical to understand that one cannot, and should not, avoid accepting your own responsibility in what doctrine you believe. James Eglinton (2011) stated this responsibility very well:

No doubt my doctrine has its own fair share of weakness and imperfection, but I am at least thankful that my face is not covered in another man’s theological egg.

The Master Teacher himself said to the Pharisees and Scribes that they had invoked or invalidated God’s word by their tradition – they had robbed God’s word of its power (Matt 15:6). I have stated in other writings that they did not heed Him then and many among the religious are not heeding Him today.

A last observation in this regard: The Epistles, as well as the Revelation, were addressed to specific individuals and groups, and in specific circumstances. This is a basic reality of context that has been neglected and ignored by many over centuries and is also continuing today. The consequence has been and still is the creation of messages that had not been written. It is inevitable that inaccuracy in one's interpretation of the Scriptures may provide easy answers to difficult questions in some places, but those very answers will create problems elsewhere. My study of literature on the topic of this book has accentuated the reality of this statement again and again.

The Epistles, as well as the Revelation, were addressed to specific individuals and groups, and in specific circumstances.

Hand in hand with this reality of context goes another – the real sequence of Paul's letters. While the letter to the Romans occupies the first physical position in the New Testament of our Bibles, it was actually only Paul's sixth letter (after Galatians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, and 1 & 2 Corinthians). The importance of working with the correct sequence will become apparent in the course of our discussions.

THE CALVINISTIC DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION

Millard J. Erickson (1992: 288) points out that the doctrine of predestination is probably one of the **least understood and most puzzling** of all Christian doctrines. Many regard it as obscure and even bizarre, while others simply accept that it is beyond human understanding and all the theological discourses consequently boil down to hair splitting. Erickson accepts more jokes may have been made about this doctrine than about all other Christian doctrines combined. Wow!

The Calvinistic doctrine of predestination deals with control that God exercises over the world, that He freely and unchangeably ordained whatsoever comes to pass. Nothing can befall us unless God determines it. According to Calvin everything that takes place in the world does so according to God's secret plans, and it should be far from us to examine God's plans with bold curiosity (Warrick, 2009:5). **A second context of its use refers to the belief that God predestined some humans to salvation by grace, while the others have been predestined to eternal damnation.** Anyone who has not been predestined unto faith by God will allegedly not even wish to believe or to be justified (Wikipedia, 2010).

An impressive collection of biblical texts suggest (sic) that God has selected some to be saved, and that our response to the offer of salvation depends on this prior decision by God (Erickson, 1992: 288).

Therefore those teaching this doctrine state that God has chosen who would go to heaven, and who to hell even before or from the foundation of the world. The latter expression is perceived, even in many scholarly commentaries, to mean 'before the creation of the earth.' This decision is infallibly to come to pass. God has sovereignly decided beforehand to show mercy to some and damnation to others; the difference between the two groups is not in themselves, as all are equally unworthy (Wikipedia, 2010). In the words of Erickson (1992:288):

(...) election is an expression of the sovereign will or good pleasure of God. It is not based on any merit in the one elected. Nor is it based upon foreseeing that the individual will believe. It is the cause, not the result, of faith.

John Calvin defined predestination as God's eternal decree by which He determined with himself whatever He wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and accordingly, as **each one is created for one or other of these ends**, he has been predestinated to life or death (Institutes III, Ch. 21, div. 5).

The doctrine of predestination or unconditional election states that God has chosen who would go to heaven, and who to hell, even before or from the foundation of the world.

Whichever way one may look at the above, it means in simple terms that if an individual is not on God's list of pre-determined individuals to receive eternal life, it serves no purpose at all to bring him or her Gospel of the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus of Nazareth and His apostles. Also, consider that some teach the predestined or pre-elected individuals are a minority, based on their out of context interpretation of Matthew 7:14 (*"How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it"*). And one cannot overlook the words 'good pleasure of God' in this context. Wow! The expression 'God is Love' is written on so many church pulpits, and now we are asked to believe that it was God's **good pleasure** to condemn (most) people up front; that it pleased Him to do so? I will consider this good pleasure expression carefully when we look at Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Bear in mind that, based on Calvin's definition of predestination, for example, I understand individual persons to be at the heart of this doctrine.

Carson (1996:18-22) points out that historically, many Reformed Baptists in England between the middle of the eighteenth century and the middle of the twentieth emphasized God's sovereign grace in election to such an extent that they became uncomfortable with general declarations of the gospel. As far as they were concerned, unbelievers should not be told to repent and believe the gospel since they were dead in trespasses and sin, and might not in any case belong to the elect.

Think about this for a moment: One implication of this doctrine, if it really is what the Bible teaches, is that someone may even spend his or her life serving in a full-time church or

missionary capacity and yet not be one of the elect (and therefore be ‘saved’ in terms of common Christian church expression). Let us take it one step further – in terms of this doctrine there could be no assurance on earth that John Calvin belonged to the elect, although he is credited most for embedding this doctrine in the church even if it did not originate with him. Nonsensical? Not at all, for consider that there is more than sufficient indication on record of Calvin enforcing his understanding of Christian doctrine at the point of the sword (Cloud, 2005). Does that truly sound like the making of disciples? It even had me wondering at times whether Calvin was not a Judas Iscariot instead of being a true believer.

To be fair to Calvin it should be noted that the doctrine of predestination is not unique to him, but has been propagated since the time of Paul by many theologians who sought to explain how the “elect” were “eternally adopted” as “sons of God.” The greatest influence on Calvin in this regard was Augustine (MacPhail, 2010:1).

In my files, also, I have the report of a newspaper interview with a South African theologian and ex-minister in a conservative Reformed denomination. He openly rejects the deity of Christ and states that many of his former church colleagues (serving ministers) feel the same. They cannot leave their church position as he had done, however, for it is their bread and butter. Research by the Barna group in the United States of America in 2004 found that 49% of Protestant pastors did not have a biblical world view. Need one say more?

It is not surprising then that this doctrine has come under much criticism, from within both scholarly and other circles. But instead of getting to the simple truth I believe the Bible presents and which I deal with in the next chapters, an ever present theology of rationalisation has continued to sow confusion. A typical example comes from a prominent blog I had been subscribed to. Acknowledging that he followed the Calvinistic view, the blogger concluded as follows (Patton, 2010):

As difficult as this doctrine may be for some, we simply don't have the option of flying in the face of the argument simply because we don't like it. I, personally, have come to a place where I understand and respect this doctrine. I do have a lot of questions for God (like why didn't you elect everyone?), but I recognize that if God did not elect anyone, no one would ever come to him. I also recognize the many questions that arise from this such as if unconditional election is true, why evangelize? **But the mere presence of difficulties does not alleviate the truth from its burden to be.** Our best posture before God upon learning of such truths is to stand with our hand over our mouth and the gavel at a distance (My accentuation).

Understand this doctrine? It is doubtful that anyone really does despite all their explanations. Consider the above statement that no one would ever come to God if He did not elect (predestine) anyone. That is pure assumption not rooted firmly in the Scriptures. In my mind it unavoidably raises the question as to why then God created the human being? Ironically, one valuable lesson I learned from other writings of this blogger, is to apply the principle of clarity when considering doctrine. Here it seems he ignored his own sound advice.

A 1912 Lutheran Synod declared that the question of election was a mystery that should not be resolved as it would constitute action that would both deprive God of His glory as only Saviour, and weaken man's sense of responsibility in relation to the acceptance or rejection of grace. What a poor excuse for failing to rightly divide the Word of Truth! If there is something depriving God of His glory, it may well be this very doctrine. Also, what sense can **acceptance or rejection of grace** then make? Universalists, on the other hand, believe Calvinistic predestination reduced the great majesty and sovereignty of God. They believe an all-loving Creator would want to save all of humanity (Wikipedia, 2010).

The Dutch Reformed theologian, Jacobus Arminius, whose view is regarded as heresy by Calvinists, did not reject predestination but based it upon God's foreknowledge (or prior

knowledge) of man's merit (MacPhail, 2010). I look into the biblical meaning of foreknowledge in the chapter dealing with Paul's epistles, specifically in Romans 8.

One article that recently came to my attention undoubtedly takes confusion on the topic to new heights:

The people whom God chooses to be saved in this life, through His gift of faith to believe in the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, before they die and before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, are called His Elect. All people fall into one of two categories, Elect, those who become believers or non-Elect, those who remain unbelievers. However, the non-Elect unbelievers are not condemned to a hell of eternal torture, as believed by Calvinism. Ultimately, in God's time and in His order extending beyond this Age, all people, without a single exception, are destined to be saved and reconciled to God, through His gift of faith to believe in the true Gospel of Jesus Christ (2014; Sulem).

There are more variations of views, but let us conclude with the above. The purpose of this book is not to analyse and comment on all the predestination doctrines and subtle variations the Christian environment is noted for. Rather, it is an effort to start out afresh with the Bible and not with Calvin, in an attempt to present what I believe is the **right and non-mysterious** understanding of what the biblical position is without all the confusion presented by the theology of excuses or rationalisation. I believe that would be the heart of God in this matter.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Whatever one's outlook and theology might be, it would be difficult to deny that this chapter reflects the sad reality of a variety of doctrinal views. Yet, they are based on the same Bible that Christendom traditionally declares to be the **inerrant Word of God**? Something surely seems to be amiss!

Although Paul's stern reprimand of the Corinthians that God was not the author of confusion referred to disorder in their

gatherings (1 Co 14:33), one will surely not be at fault if you apply the same principle to Christian doctrine.

Confusion in Christian doctrine is not given by God, but is the product of man's traditions and techniques of ancient philosophy.

Truth is not dependent on our acknowledgement, or even our knowledge of its existence. Truth is truth. Less than the truth does not become truth by dressing it up in biblical terminology. One atheist smugly noted: *“Theists often claim that their scriptures are the ‘truth’. In the case of Christians this seems to be open to doubt. I have always understood that ‘truth’ has the characteristic of being unambiguous and yet there are reported to be 38000 different Christian denominations! How are we to take the idea that the scriptures are ‘true’ seriously when there seems to be so little agreement as to what, if anything, they actually mean”* (Blunderov). He certainly has a case.

We start our journey in search of the biblical truth on our topics from here by first looking at the principle of election in the Old Testament.

THE PRINCIPLE OF ELECTION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

Our Bible is a book of covenant. The books that form the Old Testament are a record of God's covenants with individuals, families and with one particular nation. These records are also a description of God's dealings with people in preparation for a new covenant that was to come (Heb 9). The Law given to the Hebrew people at Mount Sinai was to direct them until Messiah and **it directed the whole of the civil and religious state and combination of humanity in the world as they knew it.**

This event and principle of the founding of Israel as a nation is also described in the Scriptures as the **planting of the heavens and laying of the earth's foundation** (Isa 51:16):

I have put My words in your mouth, and covered you in the shadow of My hand, in order to plant the heavens, to found the earth, and to say to Zion, "You are My people."

This described a dispensation which would eventually receive completion or fulfilment in the Messiah and the New Covenant. However, in Hebraic thought the giving of the Torah to the Hebrew nation at Mount Sinai, commonly called the Law of God, is regarded as the completion of the original creation described in Genesis 1. Even after the natural world was in place, it wasn't until the Torah was given that the purpose of creation was realised and thus the world could be said to have reached completion, according to the Hebraic

view (2010; Torah Learning Resources). This is the picture that the Hebrew literature would present to them.

Scripture is by far the best interpreter of Scripture (provided, of course, that one stays within the correct and original contexts). This was a principle John Calvin also expressed (2009; Warrick: 2).

Original context in the Scriptures would strongly embrace and reflect the culture and literary characteristics of the relevant time.

Let us carefully consider Isaiah 51:16 against this principle to weigh the aforementioned Hebraic view. In this portion of the Scriptures God is talking to the people of Judah in the lifetime of the prophet Isaiah (near the end of the 700's BC) about their salvation. There is no way that this verse can in truth be construed as referring to the original creation of the earth. The Hebrew word translated as *earth* here, is *'erets*. It is commonly used in the sense of the earth or a land (country). However, it can also designate nations, which is clearly the correct application in this verse (Strong no. H776; Ancient Hebrew Lexicon, 1455). **In giving His Torah to the Hebrew people at Sinai, God had for the first time directed the orderly arrangement of the Hebrew people as a nation (or laid the foundation of the *'erets*).**

While we are working towards the concept of the Elect and its parallels in the New Testament, one cannot hope to correctly understand the new if you don't first understand the old. In this spirit, let us firstly consider the principle of election (and the elect) in the Old Testament as the basis from which we then continue to approach the principle as it appears in the books of the New Testament.

The Hebrew term *bahiyir* (Strong no. H972) is an adjective meaning 'chosen'. In the King James Version of the Bible, the term is translated 'elect' only four times, and all four occur in Isaiah (42:1; 45:4; 65:9 & 65:22):

- Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; (...) (Isa 42:1).
- For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name (...) (Isa 45:4).
- And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there (Isa 65:9).
- They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands (Isa 65:22).

Elsewhere it (and other Hebrew terms with similar meaning) are translated 'chosen'. The Holman Christian Standard Bible renders *bahiyr* 'chosen one' or 'chosen ones' in these verses of Isaiah. Whichever alternative one prefers, it depicts individual persons, families or a very specific nation, all in relationship with God. Also, Scripture shows it was **always connected to a specific purpose and came with special blessings and promises from the Lord**.

While the English translation of the Hebrew *Tanakh* (1917) has a similar rendering of the four verses in Isaiah mentioned above, the word 'elect' also appears in five other verses. Three are Numbers 1:16; 16:2; and 26:9 where men of good standing in the congregation (elect of the congregation) are referred to and for which three different Hebrew words are used. Isaiah 43:20 and 65:15 both use the word *bahiyr*.

One finds many examples of individual persons chosen for a specific purpose in the history of the Hebrew people, such as Moses, Gideon, David and the Gentile king Cyrus. Even Pharaoh was chosen to see God's power and to make His name known in all the earth (Exod 9:16). The history of Noah describes a chosen family (Gen 6:8 – 9:29), while the history of Israel deals with a chosen nation.

Please note that the expression, ‘predestine’ (or ‘predestinate’) is not found in any translation of the Old Testament I have consulted (a large group of English translations were searched, including the 1917 translation of the Hebrew Tanakh) and is therefore not discussed in this chapter. None of the uses of ‘elect’ in the translations noted above reflects the idea of predestination in any sense.

By now the reader should be clear on what my heart and approach are in this matter. I am not on a mission to get ‘my point’ across, but am focused on a sincere effort to rightly divide the Word of Truth, to find the true meaning within the true context. The reader should also be clear as to my view of the damage that the application of philosophical techniques have done to biblical teaching over the centuries, irrespective of whether those practices originated with the Jews, Greeks or Romans. Yet I acknowledge that spiritual philosophising remains a trap to us all. I try my best to avoid falling into that trap, but if the reader feels I have not succeeded to do so (whether only in some places or throughout), please feel free to voice your concern in that regard. Our website www.hoseaconnection.org affords you the opportunity to do so.

In the course of the discussion I will also deal with other important concepts such as the reality or not of human free will.

IN THE BEGINNING

The biblical record of creation describes a **specific sequence of events**, a sequence of life that the natural sciences seemingly agree with (although many scientists might deny creation by God). Every part needed for the progression to or survival of the next was first put into place. Then at the end of the process God made *adam* (Strong no. H120), the human being, after His own image, with the command to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it (Gen 1:26-28). Please note that for the purposes of this discussion it is irrelevant whether one believes in a literal six day creation or not; and even in the creation of a single

human being to whom is added a single helper or not. What does matter, though, is whether you believe in the Creator God revealed in the Bible. He stands at the very core or centre of the principle of election in the Bible, being the One who elects.

(Even staunch atheists, who regard the Bible as religious folklore or myth, would need to revise the content in many of their arguments if they were prepared to put every portion of the Scriptures in its true and original context, stripped of the polluting philosophies applied through the centuries. It is their free choice to continue disagreeing with and rejecting the Bible as truth, but they should at least do so within the true and accurate context of what had been written and understood at the time if they, for their part, wish to claim honest interpretation).

It is exactly here that my first questions about the Calvinistic and similar predestination or election doctrines arise: These doctrines imply that God decided to make a living being in His own image, of which he would beforehand already reject and condemn part – seemingly starting with Adam’s first-born? Or was Eve perhaps the starting point? This condemned part would not have any free will in accepting or denying their Creator.

There can be little doubt that the views I express here, and others that follow, will be rejected by some without due consideration. Having made this statement, I also acknowledge after the previously noted words of James Eglinton (2011), that my understanding may have its own fair share of weakness and imperfection, but I am at least thankful my face is not covered in someone else’s theological egg. Remember that I am looking to understand the principle of election or predestination according to the Bible and not according to the philosophised and titrated interpretations of people, whoever and however sincere they all might be. In the process, though, I will unavoidably be weighing the human interpretations, and if needed translation differences and errors too, against the content and context of the Bible.

NEW BEGINNINGS

Noah

Some of the chosen ones in the Old Testament had to do with a relatively limited purpose, such as Gideon. In other cases, however, the purpose was a new beginning. Noah was the first man born after the death of Adam and his history brings us the first new beginning. Humankind became so evil in His eyes that God was **grieved in His heart and regretted that He made the human on the earth** (Gen 6:6). God decided to wipe them and all living creatures from the face of the earth, except Noah, a righteous man who found favour in God's eyes, and his family. **We see in this portion of Scripture a strong refutation of the Calvinistic predestination/election doctrine**, for why would God regret something that He predestined?

Through Noah's family (or remnant) there would come a new beginning (Gen 6-9). He was also the first man after Adam to receive **the original command** again from God:

God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The fear and terror of you will be in every living creature on the earth, every bird of the sky, every creature that crawls on the ground, and all the fish of the sea. They are placed under your authority" (Gen 9:1-2).

Noah's one son was Shem, which means 'name' (I am aware of differences of opinion whether he was the eldest or not, but that has no real significance for this book). God is also known as The Name, *HaShem*, in Hebraic culture. Shem was blessed by Noah above his brothers who were to be subordinate to him and his descendants. He fathered many peoples and was the ancestor of Eber (fourth generation) as well as Abraham (tenth generation). The name 'Hebrew' was derived from Eber.

We see throughout the Old Testament how Noah's blessing of Shem worked out in the descendants of Abraham (Zodhiates). The nations on the known earth spread out from Noah's sons and their families (or clans) after the flood (Gen 10:32). It was from Shem's lineage that the Messiah would eventually be born.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

Abraham's family (or clan) lived first in Ur of the Chaldeans. From there his father, Terah, took the family and set out to go to the land Canaan. However, they never completed that journey, but settled in Haran. It was here that God called Abraham (then still known as Abram, which means 'exalted father') to take his family and go to the land God would show him. With this command from God came special blessings and promises, of which the central one was that all the clans of the earth would be blessed in him (Gen 12:3). Later, when Abram was 99 years old, God made a covenant with him and changed his name to Abraham, or 'father of a multitude' (Zodhiates, Strong no. H85). According to this covenant Abraham would be made extremely fruitful and nations and kings would come from him. History shows the fulfilment of these promises. The pinnacle of the blessings, that all nations would be blessed in him, was eventually fulfilled in the reconciliation of humankind with their Creator through Christ Jesus:

Now everything is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ (...) in Christ, God was reconciling the world [*kosmos: humanity*] to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them (...) (2 Co 5:18-19).

After Abraham's death God reaffirmed the covenant and blessings to his son, Isaac, because Abraham listened to God's voice and kept His mandate, commands, statutes and instruction (Gen 26:3-5). Eventually the covenant was reaffirmed to Isaac's son, Jacob. Interestingly, Jacob was renamed Israel (meaning 'he will rule as God') and the command to be fruitful and multiply was repeated to him (Gen 35:11-12). His posterity became known in history as the Israelites, or *Beneh Yisrael*, the children of Israel.

The history of Jacob and his sons developed into the sojourn in Egypt. His favourite son, Joseph, played a central role in this part of history. Exodus 1:7 shows us that the Israelites were fruitful; they increased rapidly and became extremely numerous so that the land was filled with them. It was here that the Hebrew people, who would eventually become the nation called Israel, grew in number. After the death of Joseph and those of

that generation, they were oppressed by the Egyptian Pharaoh and put into forced labour.

Jacob and Esau

I need to pause for a moment with Jacob and his first-born twin brother Esau in view of the Lord's announcement to their mother, Rebekah, in Genesis 25:23, "*Two nations are in your womb; two people will [come] from you and be separated. One people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.*" Please note that the Lord's announcement to Rebekah was made after she had already conceived the twins and not before. Then in Malachi 1:2-3 we find the troublesome statement by the Lord that He loved Jacob and hated Esau.

Throughout the Bible one finds that nations and lands become known by a person's name. In stating through the prophet Malachi that He loved Jacob and hated Esau, God was **not referring to the two brothers, whether before or after they were born**, but to the nations that came from them and long after they lived (c. 450 or 420 BC). God clearly foreknew which way Esau and his descendants would take, but it remained their choice. The evil deeds done by the Edomites (descendants of Esau) to the Israelites are well documented in the Old Testament (e.g. Num 20). It is for these that God is said to have hated them as a country or nation.

Here again, however, this did not mean that all individuals from that nation would be condemned. In fact, the Bible refers to a godly remnant from Edom in Amos 9:12. Jeremiah 12:14-16 illustrates the Lord's compassion towards the nations (such as Edom) which He called His evil neighbours, if they diligently learned the ways of God's people. One clearly sees here also the reality of free will to choose the way of God in action.

I will touch on the matter of Jacob and Esau again as it is raised in the discussion of Romans 9:10-13.

Moses

Moses became the next chosen one to be instrumental in the fulfilment of the new beginning God promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He was sent to Egypt by God for the following specific purpose:

Therefore tell the Israelites: I am Yahweh, and I will deliver you from the forced labor of the Egyptians and free you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and great acts of judgment. **I will take you as My people, and I will be your God**, who delivered you from the forced labor of the Egyptians. I will bring you to the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord (Exod 6:6-8; HCSB; my accentuation).

Here one finds the first direct statement describing the Hebrew people, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as God's chosen people, even though the word *bahiyir* was not used. **They were all included as God's people and not only an elect portion of them. This once again goes against the Calvinistic election doctrine** (that is, if one does not add philosophies to the scene). It is in this part of history that even Pharaoh was chosen (*āmad*; raised up, Strong no. H5975) of God for a specific purpose, "(...) *to show My power and to make my name known in all the earth*" (Exod 9:16).

The nation of Israel

The history and development of the nation of Israel is a continuation of the history of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and God's covenant with them. It is only in the exodus from Egypt that we find the birth of Israel as a nation out of the descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob. They were never known or recognised as a nation before.

God's manifest election of Israel as His special people did not come because they were more numerous and able to exert more influence in the known world in and of themselves. We learn from Deuteronomy 7:6-8 that they were described as the

fewest (or least) of all the peoples. In Exodus 19:6 they are described by God as a kingdom of priests and His holy or sacred nation, while the record in 1 Chronicles 16:13 calls them the “(...) offspring of Israel His servant, Jacob’s descendants – His chosen ones (*bahiyr*).”

Moses repeatedly provided clear descriptions of the fact of the free will of man to love God, for example, “*I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, love the Lord your God, obey Him, and remain faithful to Him. For He is your life (...)*” (Deut 30:19-20). Does one not here see an outright declaration of the human’s free will, a definite option of choice between life and death? God is that life Moses asked them to choose. Similarly, is that not also the essence of the human’s New Covenant choice in which Christ is the way, the truth, and the life?

Why then, one may ask, did God choose this people and for such a purpose? For the answer we need only go back to the promise to Abraham, that all clans (or families) of the earth would be blessed through him and his descendants; his bloodline. To do so, it was necessary that the world should know God, and for this purpose the nation was chosen as a kingdom of priests, a kingdom of mediators between man and God. In their culture a priest was regarded as a mediator between them and God. Now they were chosen to fulfil the same role as a people (or nation) among the Gentile nations (Deut 28:9-10 & 1 Kgs 8:29, 43 & 60).

The Lord will establish you as His holy people, as He swore to you, if you obey the commands of the Lord your God and walk in His ways. Then all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the Lord’s name, and they will stand in awe of you (Deut 28:9-10).

So then all the people on earth will know Your name, to fear You as Your people Israel do (...) and so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God. There is no other (1 Kgs 8:60)!

As we continue reading through the Old Testament Scriptures we see time and again the manifestation of God's power through them in the face of the nations of the world. One stands amazed to see how He loves this stiff-necked people (Deut 32:9), disciplines and restores them, even stating that He has married them (Jer 3:14). The history following the death of Joshua, who succeeded Moses as the nation's leader, has been recorded in the Book of Judges. In this book we read again and again, that the Israelites forsook the Lord God of their fathers and that God's anger rose against them (e.g. Judg 2:10-14). This is another clear illustration of the biblical fact of the human's free will in this regard.

The question inevitably arises: Why would God become angry at something He predestined or decreed that it would infallibly come to pass?

On his deathbed Jacob assigned Judah the role of leader and king, and this prophecy was fulfilled in 869 BC when all twelve tribes united under the reign of King David of the tribe of Judah. Israel remained a single kingdom during the reigns of Saul, David and Solomon only. The biblical state of Israel was comprised of twelve tribes named after the sons of Jacob (Gen 49), with David and his would be successors coming from the one Southern tribe of Judah. The city of Jerusalem was situated on Judea's tribal border.

Solomon was succeeded by his son Rehoboam. Following poor counsel from his own younger generation and ignoring the wiser counsel of the elders, Rehoboam's tax actions lead to political conflict that ended up in a break-away by the ten Northern tribes, weakening the once powerful nation. Jeroboam ben Navat was made king of this Northern kingdom, which was then called **Israel**, and Samaria became their capital.

To break the connection between his people and Jerusalem as the centre of worship of God, Jeroboam set up alternative places of worship in the north. He not only built new temples, but set up golden calves in these new temples. This kingdom lasted little more than 200 years. **All 19 their kings were idolaters who ensured their people remained in idolatry.** They refused to heed the warnings of God through his prophets, and eventually God removed them from his sight (as a nation; from their land) through the Assyrian Empire in 722 BC (2 Kgs 17:22, 23).

People from other lands were brought in to populate Samaria and the land of the north. Historians declare that the approximately six million Israelites were so completely dispersed amongst the nations that they took on the new cultures and eventually **lost all awareness of their original tribal identity.** There is little real evidence that any of them returned to rejoin the Southern Kingdom of Judah in substantial numbers before or after the Babylonian exile of the people of the Southern kingdom. They are remembered in Jewish circles even today as the ten lost tribes (Canadian British-Israel Association, 2008). One must bear in mind that they had been in idolatry for approximately 200 years and had long lost the anchor of the Mosaic covenant to preserve their identity.

The Southern kingdom was known by the name of **Judah** (who was Jacob's fourth son). Their land was called Judea and Jerusalem remained their capitol. The kingdom included the tribe of Benjamin also, but they were the smallest of the twelve tribes and Judah formed the main body. Although most of the Southern Kingdom of Judah's kings followed the idolatrous ways of the kings of Israel, a few of them served the true God. Most of them practiced Baal worship and participated in other Canaanite religions despite the warnings of the prophets. The last three kings were all evil and the Babylonians swept down upon Jerusalem in 597 BC. They attacked Jerusalem once more in 586 BC. Captives from both these campaigns were taken in

exile to Babylon to mark the victories over the Kingdom of Judah (Wikipedia, 2008).

Thus the people of the 70 year exile in Babylon were the citizens of the Kingdom of Judah – primarily of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Jeremiah 52:27 confirms this position: “And the king of Babylon smote them, and put them to death in Riblah in the land of Hamath. **Thus Judah was carried away captive out of his own land.**”

So the prophecy in Jeremiah 20:4 was fulfilled, that Judah would be handed over to the king of Babylon to be taken in exile to that city. This kingdom (or perhaps more accurately, the tribe), was preserved because it was chosen by God to retain the royal lineage of David from which the Messiah would be born to fulfil the original promise to Abraham! There may have been some members of the ‘ten lost tribes’ of Israel (refugees) among them, but they are never recognised in the biblical record under such tribal identity except for some Levites and priests (as confirmed by Ezra 1:5). We see in this history another important biblical principle that is related to the principle of a new beginning, namely that of a remnant, which of course, was also present in the history of Noah.

Not only were the people of Israel a chosen and special people, but so was the land of God’s promise to Abraham and his descendants. In Deuteronomy 11:12 God described it as a land He cared for, a land He was always watching over from the beginning to the end of the year. The Bible does not explain why in human analytical terms, but geographical, economical and political history does give strong testimony. We remain constantly aware of the dangers of philosophising the situation, but the integrity of Vander Laan’s explanation (see references for source) of the land as a crossroads is emphatically supported by history. Look at maps of the Ancient Near East from whatever angle you wish, that piece of land stood out as a geographical, economical and political crossroads of the early Old Testament era and world. The nation who controlled that little spot could clearly influence the whole of the known world

of that time and so serve God's purpose for putting them there: that the world may know God!

In that land God also chose one city, Jerusalem, so that His name would be there. The expression 'name', or *shem* in Hebrew was never regarded simply as a 'label', but it represented a memorial or monument of the whole identity and character of the name bearer. Marshall (1996:799-802) provides the following description:

The name is thus a summary of stating what God is in himself (his name is all that is known to be true about him and his motives of action) and also what God is to others, allowing them to know his name (letting them into his truth) and sharing his name with them (letting them into his fellowship).

That God's name was on the city meant that the city of Jerusalem testified of His whole being. In the Hebraic mind and culture Jerusalem was not only regarded as God's holy or chosen city, but also as the centre of the known world. This, as well as Vander Laan's understanding of why God chose that land for His chosen people, is perhaps best confirmed by Ezekiel 5:5, in which we read: *"This is what the Lord God says: I have set this Jerusalem in the center of the nations, with countries that surround her."*

The temple in Jerusalem was the physical earthly place of God's presence among His people.

THE PRINCIPLE OF FREE WILL IN JEREMIAH

It is not my intention to note every possible example of the human free will to follow God's ways or to love Him in the Old Testament, but seeing that we are looking at an important prophecy through Jeremiah, it seems a good place to consider the role of the human free will. In Jeremiah 13:8-11 one finds the

following prominent description of the principle of free will in operation among the nation of Judah:

Then the word of the Lord came to me: “This is what the Lord says: just like this I will ruin the great pride of both Judah and Jerusalem. These evil people, who **refuse to listen to Me**, who walk in the stubbornness of their own hearts, and who have followed other gods to serve and worship – they will be like this underwear, of no use whatsoever. Just as underwear clings to one’s waist, so **I fastened the whole house of Israel and Judah to Me**” – [this is] the Lord’s declaration – “so that they might be My people for My fame, praise, and glory, **but they would not obey** (author’s accentuation).

One cannot ignore the fact that the Lord was once again describing the whole house of the original twelve tribes as the people He called (chose, elected), but they would not obey and remained stubborn in their own hearts. There can be no question that this stubbornness was rooted in their free will to choose and was not a predestined result. To come to the latter conclusion one would have to read into the text what is not there.

While the focus here is on the book of Jeremiah, it is in order to consider Jeremiah as an important chosen one of God as well: *“The word of the Lord came to me: I chose you before I formed you in the womb; I set you apart before you were born. I appointed you a prophet to the nations”* (Jer 1:4-5). What one sees here is a very explicit election of an individual by God to service. In this case God clearly described this election or appointment as a predestined one – before he was formed in the womb.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The whole of the Old Testament from Genesis 12 onwards is the revelation of God to a post flood humanity that had wilfully turned its back on Him. It begins with one chosen man, Abraham, continuing through his son, Isaac, and grandson, Jacob and their families, and eventually their descendants who

became known as the nation of Israel. This revelation is seen even in times of tribulation following the nation's disobedience and open rejection of God and His teaching of how they should live.

As I noted in the introductory observations, the Law given to the Hebrew people at Mount Sinai was to direct them until Messiah and it directed the whole civil and religious state and combination of men in the world. It was a dispensation which would eventually be completed in the Messiah and the New Covenant, when there would once again be a “new earth and new heavens.” John Lightfoot (1853) wrote in this regard that, “(...) a person at all familiar with the phraseology of the Old Testament Scriptures, knows that the dissolution of the Mosaic economy, and the establishment of the Christian, is often spoken of as the removing of the old earth and heavens, and the creation of a new earth and new heavens.” The contextual reality of Lightfoot's view aligns to the description of the orderly arrangement of Israel (through the giving of the Law at Sinai) as a civil and religious state and combination of humanity in the world they knew, as the planting of the heavens and laying of the earth's foundation.

Removing the old earth and heavens and creation of a new earth and new heavens is one of a spiritual change and not a physical event.

The ‘new earth and new heavens’ once again describe a new beginning and as I will show in the next chapter, the principle of election in the New Testament Scriptures is closely connected to chosen individuals, groups and, yes, to another new beginning. Instead of a single chosen nation, however, we find a chosen generation from all the nations.

Various Old Testament Scriptures also clearly demonstrate the working of free will in obeying God among the people and

leaders of God's chosen nation. Proverbs 16:6, for example, makes it clear that *“Wickedness is atoned for by loyalty and faithfulness, and one turns from evil by the fear of the Lord.”*

THE PRINCIPLE OF ELECTION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT – PART 1

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

As one moves into and through the New Testament, you find the application of a number of words that convey the sense of being chosen or selected. These are *elect*, *election*, *chosen*, *predestinated*, *ordained* and *appointed*. Different Greek words form the basis, but one must also bear in mind that the same Greek word is sometimes translated with different English words. All of this again underlines the fact that careful consideration of the original meaning and context in each instance is of critical importance. I will endeavour to do so as we look at the principle of election (or predestination) in the New Testament. Also, it needs to be borne in mind that different translations may use different words in specific places. The King James Version, for example, uses ‘ordained’ in Acts 13:48, whereas it has been replaced by ‘appointed’ in the New King James Version.

Bear in mind too, that **the New Testament writings are record, or testimony of new beginnings again**. The New Testament (or Covenant) is not described as a renewed or restored covenant as some would have it, but **a qualitatively new one** as opposed to the older or former. It carries a sense of being better because it is different, for example Hebrews 8:13 and 9:15. This is also the sense implied in the Old Testament prophecy of Jeremiah 31:31 (which is repeated in Hebrews 8:8):

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new (Heb. *hadas*: new, fresh) covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; (...) (TANAKH).

Behold, the days come, says Jehovah, that I will cut with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, a covenant new, (...)” (The Interlinear Bible).

By saying, a new covenant, He has declared that the first is old. And what is old and aging is about to disappear (Heb 8:13).

Therefore He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance, because a death has taken place for the redemption from the transgressions committed under the first covenant (Heb 9:15).

As we progress through the New Testament record in our search to rightly divide the Word of Truth in its application of the ideas of predestination, selection or election in possible various nuances, there is one thing to bear in mind above all: the purpose of Christ’s birth, life on earth and crucifixion. **His purpose was not the crucifixion: that was His destiny. His purpose was to reconcile humanity with God in the manifest Kingdom of Heaven (or Kingdom of God) that He came to reveal.** The following verses of Scripture, for example, are unambiguous and very clear in this regard (author’s accentuations):

For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so **that everyone who believes in Him** will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world that He might condemn the world, but **that the world might be saved through Him.** Anyone who believes in Him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the One and Only Son of God (John 3:16-18). (The Greek word translated as ‘world’ in this portion of Scripture is *kosmos*, here denoting humankind).

For while we were still helpless, at the appointed moment, Christ died for the ungodly (...) For if, **while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son,** [then how]

much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by His life! (Rom 5:6, 10).

First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, who **wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth**. For there is one God and one mediator between God and man, a man, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself – a **ransom for all**, a testimony at the proper time. (1 Tim 2:1-6).

For the grace of God has appeared, with salvation, **for all people** (Titus 2:11).

Just as a thought for safe guidance in our study: There is absolutely no hint of any expressed wish or purpose in these verses on God’s side to see only some and not all people reconciled with Him. After all, the human was created in God’s own image to serve the earth. The word *katallaso* (Strong’s no. G2644) used in Romans 5 implies “(...) *the divine work of redemption denoting that act of redemption insofar as God Himself is concerned by taking upon Himself our sin and becoming an atonement. Thus a relationship of peace with mankind is established which was hitherto prevented by the demands of His justice*” (Zodhiates). To read a predetermined salvation of only some into the New Testament Scriptures is to read far beyond and above what is written.

Some scholars also apply Matthew 7:14 (the narrow and broad way, with only few finding the former) out of its context to ‘prove’ that only a minority are to receive this ‘predetermined salvation’. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus of Nazareth was talking to the multitudes **in their present tense**. He was teaching them about **their time**, including a warning against false prophets. Jesus continuously spoke against Jerusalem and the religious leadership in His parables. This context for His words on the narrow way can again be clearly seen in the Luke 13:22-29 parallel. Also, bear in mind that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). There is no other

way to the Father. As such He is the Narrow Way and history records His rejection by the vast majority of the people and religious leaders of Judea and Jerusalem of that time.

FIRST MENTION: THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

It is important to set sound contextual perspective as we apply the principle of first mention of elect, election, chosen and predestinated (or predestined) to the New Testament writings. The word appointed, or the alternative, ordained, is used in other contexts as well and they need to be evaluated in those portions of Scripture where they are often interpreted in the sense of indicating predestination. In the process one needs to remember that the New Testament books do not appear in our Bibles in their true sequence of writing. Records show the Epistle of James, for example, to be the oldest of these books (written around 45 AD), followed by Paul's Epistle to the Galatians (49 AD), and the two to the Thessalonians (50 AD).

Although the four Gospels were only written at various stages between 50 AD and 66 AD, the reality, however, is that they quote the statements or declarations that Jesus of Nazareth made in his earthly lifetime. As such it would only be correct to regard Jesus' first use of the concepts for applying the first mention principle to the NT text.

The very first physical mention of the word 'chosen' in the KJV is found in Matthew 12:18, which underlines the fulfilment or completion of the messianic prophecy in Isaiah 42:1-4. Here it is the Greek word *hairetizo* (Strong no. G140) and it is used only in this verse of the New Testament. As it just repeats Isaiah, we cannot regard this instance as the first mention of the concept in the New Testament. The next mention of the word 'chosen' comes from Matthew 20:16 in the parable of the vineyard workers. This time it is the Greek word *eklektos* (Strong's no. G1588), which indicates selection through thoughtful and deliberate consideration, with the added idea of kindness, favour and love. Added to it is the message that many

are called while few are chosen (Zodhiates). The same message is repeated in Matthew 22:14, the well-known parable of the wedding banquet.

In Matthew 24:22 and its parallel in Mark 13:20, within the end-times prophecy of Jesus to His disciples, He refers to the shortening of the days in the great tribulation that was to come in their generation for the elect's sake. Here we have this very same Greek word *eklektos* translated as 'elect'. Mark actually uses it twice in a double statement, "(...) *for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen (...).*"

Many called; few chosen

When the chief priests and Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew He was speaking about them (Matt 21:45). Careful study of the parables of Jesus within their written context shows that many, if not most of them, were specific pronouncements of coming judgement and change (McDurmon, 2011: 5). They had a **direct relevance to the generation of Jews living at that time**, and were often very emphatically addressed to those religious leaders. Consequently I agree with Albert Barnes in his summation that while many were called and would turn to Christ, some were and would be chosen for specific purposes. One could say that the chosen are called (or invited) out of the called. It does not undergird the Calvinistic doctrine of a broader predetermined election of some to salvation and some to condemnation (Albert Barnes' Notes on The Bible, e-Sword). The twelve close disciples as well as Paul come to mind as perhaps the best examples of such chosen ones.

Most parables were addressed to the religious leaders of Jesus' time and had a direct relevance to that generation of Jews.

One would certainly be justified at this point to ask about Judas Iscariot. He was clearly described by Jesus as one of His twelve chosen ones (John 6:70; Gk *eklegomai*). Jesus referred to the twelve the Father had given Him again in His prayer (John 17:12) and it included Judas, whose destiny it was to be the son of perdition (or destruction). Once again there was a specific purpose; **that the Scripture might be fulfilled**. While commentators generally accept Judas was predestined to eternal condemnation, the Bible is not clinically clear on his eternal position. Matthew wrote that Judas showed remorse and confessed that he had sinned (Matt 27:3). Does the mention of ‘lost’ in Jesus’ prayer not refer to being lost for the apostolic service which was to come? After all, this coming service of taking the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world was at the heart of the prayer. The eleven others had remained intact.

The generation problem

Matthew 24:34 (and its parallels in Mark 13:30 and Luke 21:32) has been an awkward verse for many scholars, and unnecessarily so. Sadly, some popular modern end-times teachings demand a very specific and much wider explanation in order to support or ‘prove’ them.

We need to bear in mind that Matthew 24 is not a standalone section of the Gospel. Of course the same is true for the parallels in the other Gospels. The whole context starts out with Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem in Matthew 21 and continues through to Matthew 26. Addressing the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23, Jesus told them too that, *“Truly I say to you, will come all these things on – generation this”* (The Interlinear Bible). In fact, Jesus already told his disciples earlier (Matt 16:28, Mark 16:1 and Luke 9:27) that some of them would not die before they saw the Son of man coming in his kingdom – which was reference to coming judgement upon Jerusalem and Judah, and destruction of the temple. It was not about a physical appearance of Jesus in the sense that popular doctrines, books and visual media love to portray it.

The whole address in Matthew 24 and 25 is **emphatically given to Jesus' disciples. They are addressed as 'you' throughout.** Attempts to rip 'this generation' in verse 34 out of this whole context, defining it as the Jewish race and assigning it some distant future meaning or one spanning 2000 years, is to do violence to the text.

The clear and unpoluted biblical record in Matthew 24 refers to a tribulation that would play out in Jerusalem and surrounding Judea, not the world at large, and not in our future. It was to take place in the generation of those disciples who were listening to Jesus when he gave that prophecy. *Genea* (Strong's no. G1074) here simply means a multitude of contemporaries (*Zhodiates*). Tribulations may surely develop in the world we know today, and it is probably physically possible for the earth to be destroyed, but that would not be the fulfilment of a prophecy in the Bible. Those prophecies were directed at very specific people/nations and in very specific situational contexts. The 'world' of Matthew 24 is not our world of today, but the Roman Empire of that era.

Three different Greek words have all been translated 'world' in some (especially older) versions of the Bible. They are:

- ***Kosmos***, refers to the orderly arrangement of earth's inhabitants, or in the context of John 3:16, humanity.
- ***Oikoumene***, which broadly speaking means the inhabited earth, but in the New Testament context it was used more specifically as indicating the Roman Empire. See the list of 'all nations under heaven' in Acts 2:5-11. This is the word used in Matthew 24:14.
- ***Aiôn***: This word, that is used 129 times, refers to a period, an era, or a dispensation, which is the position in Matthew 24:3.

Once we rip something out of its true biblical context we are in danger of seeing a Bible prophecy behind any modern day and future event, far beyond what was written.

Those who connect the concept of generation to the Jewish nation or race are not altogether wrong, but it was used of the Jewish race living at one and the same period – in this case of those living at the time of Jesus’ ministry among them and not the Jewish people extending over centuries into their future (Thayer, 1981: 112). See also, for example, this usage in Matthew 11:16; 12:39; 16:4; 23:36; Mark 8:12, 38; Luke 11:29; 17:25; Acts 13:36; and Hebrews 3:10. The word ‘this’ in the context of Jesus’ words clearly signified the Jewish generation hearing his words.

The elect in Matthew 24

In terms of simple logic we now already have a connection between the concepts of the elect and that generation in Matthew 24.

- (1). In other words, we have a **very specific generation of the Jewish nation**, in whose lifetime very specific events were to take place. It was the generation living at the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry and the continuance ministry of His chosen apostles.
- (2). From among the people of that generation there were some who Jesus described as the **elect**.

Please note that there is nothing in the terminology indicating an understanding of predestined (name-listed) individuals. It could also not refer to the Twelve, for those who had not yet been martyred by the time the prophesied events took place, found themselves far beyond the borders of Judea.

The elect referred to in Matthew 24, in my view then, from both the text and context, are those of that generation of Jews who believed Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah foretold by the prophets of old. Keep in mind that Jesus was prophesying events He qualified by the expression of ‘great tribulation,’ that was to come upon Jerusalem and Judea, and not upon other nations. I believe my understanding is firmly rooted in the Scriptures such as those previously quoted, but also John 14:6, in which Christ Jesus stated that He is the Way, the Truth,

and the Life, and that nobody comes to the Father except through Him.

(1). This statement set the standard, the norm, and the credentials of one who was to be one of the elect He referred to.

(2). It did not indicate a position in which an individual's free will to choose would be irrelevant. Matthew 19:16-22, the record of the rich young ruler, is a good example of the exercise of free choice in following Jesus the Messiah.

These believers would be the ones recognising the signs the apostles would have been teaching them and fleeing Jerusalem in time – something history confirms had in fact happened (e.g. Churton, 1785). See Acts 2:42-46 which describes the daily meetings of the believers and the place of the apostles' teaching (or doctrine) in those meetings. They were not the elect individuals because God predestined them to be, but because they chose to believe Christ Jesus was who said He was.

THE CHOSEN IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

John 1:11-13

Although the specific expression of 'chosen' is not found in this portion of Scripture, it certainly does convey the concept strongly. At the same time it also conveys the principle of free will to believe Jesus of Nazareth was (and is) the promised Messiah, with specific reference first to the Jewish nation and only thereafter the wider humanity.

He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, He gave the right to be children of God, to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, or the will of the flesh, or the will of man, but of God.

John underlines the fact here that Jesus was the Son of God and He came to His own, which was the Jewish nation – the chosen people of God through whom the world was to know God. As I previously noted, this position entailed the whole

nation and not only selected individuals from the nation. Yet, under the guidance of the religious leaders the great majority rejected Jesus as the Messiah, clearly exercising their free will. To state that this rejection was predestined (or orchestrated) by God for His good pleasure, is to move far above and beyond what this portion of Scripture states. I certainly accept that God would have had the foreknowledge of what was to happen at the time, though.

Being rejected by His own people, Jesus continued to send the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the nations and those who received Him, whether Jews or Gentiles, became children (or name bearers) of God, and were called the elect. Once again free will to choose was at hand.

The expression ‘being born of God’ described that people shed all their traditions or preconceptions and started their kingdom walk from the beginning – like new born children. This indicated a change of nature, a spiritual change, with the soul becoming conscious of the vital capacities, perceptions, and emotions of *a child of God*, before unknown (Jamieson, Fausset & Brown: e-Sword). This portion of John’s Gospel does not hold any hint of individuals reacting because they were chosen by God before the foundation of the world.

John 6:44

Some bring John 6:44, which states that no one can come to Jesus unless the Father draws him, into the picture and this might seem to support the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. But, placed within the correct and whole context, one sees Jesus contrasting the ordinary people with the haughty religious leaders of Jerusalem who took so much pride in their ‘superior learning’. Whereas the humble and ordinary would be drawn by the Father through His Son and the gospel of the kingdom of God, the high and mighty religious leaders would not. This was not a predestined result, an unconditional election of some and rejection of others, but one of free choice among the people of

that time. They were not willing to let go of one yod or tittle of their man-made traditions (Luke 16:16-17).

This point of view is qualified in verse 45: *It is written in the Prophets: And they will all be taught by God. Everyone who has listened to and learned from the Father comes to Me (...).*” The heart of this verse lies in the identifying statement of those that listened to and learned from the Father. Bear in mind that **all would be taught by God**. In his word study, Robertson accentuates that it is not enough to hear God’s voice (e-Sword). One must heed it and learn it and do it. **This is a voluntary response. This one inevitably comes to Christ**. It is not, as some would have it, that the ‘elect’ are ‘sheep’ before they believe; that election is the cause, not the result, of their being the Lord’s ‘sheep’.

In Matthew 23:37 Jesus cried out regarding the Jewish people, *“Jerusalem, Jerusalem! The city who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen who gathers her chicks under her wings, yet you were not willing!”* Jesus wished to bring them together under His name, but they were not willing! In John 1 Jesus is described as the true light who came into the world, who came to His own people, but they did not receive Him. The very fact that they are described as His own people negates the idea that they had been predestined before or at the creation to reject Him!

Following the healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath, the Jews began trying all the more to kill Jesus: not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but was even calling God His own Father, thereby declaring Himself equal with God.

Addressing them, Jesus exclaimed that they pored over the Scriptures because they thought they had eternal life in them. Though the Scriptures testified about Him, they were not willing to come to Him that they may have life (Jn 5:39-40). He was speaking here of eternal life to members of God’s original chosen nation who, ironically, responded to that covenant

position by choosing to reject the Son of God. This event and statements of Jesus also contradict any suggestion of a predestined inability to believe on their side.

They had all been taught by God – they came from generations and generations who were raised according to the Torah and the Prophets, and should have been the first to recognise and receive the long awaited Messiah. However, they were not willing to do so even though they found themselves in the fullness of the times (seasons, Gk *kairoi*) with the completion of the Torah and Prophets taking place in their midst. By their tradition they had made the word of God null and void in their own lives and in the lives of all those who blindly followed them (Matt 15:6; Luke 6:39).

John 10:26

The imagery of ‘sheep’ is prevalent in John 10:

I am the good shepherd. I know My own sheep, and they know Me, as the Father knows Me and I know the Father. I lay down My life for the sheep. But I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice. Then there will be one flock, one shepherd (John 10:14-16).

Then the Jews surrounded Him and asked, “How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If You are the Messiah, tell us plainly.” “I did tell you and you don’t believe,” Jesus answered them. “The works that I do in My Father’s name testify about Me. But you don’t believe because you are not My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me” (John 10:25-27).

John 10:26 is one of the references cited by Hayton (2015), for example, on his *Fundamentally Reformed* website as support for the statement that Scripture is quite emphatic neither our belief nor our works fit us for being elected, but rather flow from our election. According to him it therefore implies that people do not become God’s ‘sheep’ because they believe in Jesus, but they believe in Him because they were already predestined to be of God’s ‘sheep’. In Hayton’s fundamental

Reformed tradition regeneration thus precedes faith and it is God who has sovereignly predestined those individuals who would one day believe.

In the first portion quoted above Jesus was talking to some Pharisees at the time (which followed the healing of a man born blind – John 9:40). He first used the illustration of sheep that follow the shepherd because they recognise his voice, but flee from a stranger. As they still did not understand, He continued with the sheep imagery, stating a number of important principles in the whole process (the second portion quoted played out in the temple complex):

1. He was the good shepherd.
2. He knew His own sheep and they knew Him.
3. His sheep recognised His voice.
4. He had other sheep that still needed to come in.
5. When they came in, they would also listen to His voice.
6. There would be one flock, one shepherd.

Jesus frequently explained that those who knew God, followed God, listened to God, and heard from God, would naturally have known, followed, listened, and heard Himself as well, since He was from God (John 8:19, 42, 47; 14:7; 15:23; 16:3). The reference to His sheep that recognised and listened to His voice was to Jewish people who had not only been taught of God, but listened and heeded that teaching. Most Jewish leaders who heard Jesus speak did not recognise Him as the shepherd, because by that point in their history they had long before stopped listening to God's voice.

The other sheep Jesus spoke of were the Gentile believers who were to come into His sheepfold and become part of the one flock. Paul later described it as the creation of one new man out of the Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:11-22; 2 Cor 5:17). We deal with Paul's usage of predestination or election terminology in the next chapter.

Unconditional election or predestination is not taught in John 10:26 and has to be read into it. There is no statement about a divine choice in eternity past about who would believe in Jesus the Messiah. Those who truly listened to God would now follow Jesus, Jews as well as Gentiles.

John 15:16

You did not choose Me, but I chose you. I appointed you that you should go out and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you.

Myers (2015) quotes Spencer and Palmer as examples to show that Calvinists claim this text provides irrefutable affirmation of Unconditional Election to eternal life by God's sovereign choice alone. I respectfully have to disagree with such a claim. Jesus was speaking these words to the remaining eleven disciples in the upper room after Judas Iscariot had already left to betray Him. One sees that He quite clearly gave the reason He chose them, which was to service – they were soon to go out and produce much fruit (see verse 8 also). Their fruit was to remain. Here Jesus was already preparing the way for His later Great Commission of making disciples of all the nations. To connect this portion of the Bible to a predestined election of individuals throughout time to eternal life, one again needs to read above and beyond what has been written. One needs to force such a conclusion or understanding into the text.

Also, Myers quite correctly in my view, compares the earlier event described in Mark 3:13-19, in which Jesus chose the Twelve, calling them apostles, to be with Him and to be sent out to preach (except Judas Iscariot, of course, on whom a different destiny was waiting in order that the Scripture be fulfilled). In the light of John 3:16-17, which is essentially repeated in John 12:46-48, I believe that believers since then receive eternal life by faith in the Lamb of God. Believers throughout the centuries since have been chosen to serve God and love others. Like Israel of old, the nations under the New Covenant have been and are

being taught of God, while people have the free will to choose whatsoever way they will follow.

THE APPOINTED OR ORDAINED IN ACTS

When Paul and Barnabas preached the Gospel of the Kingdom of God in Antioch, Luke recorded the event:

The following Sabbath almost the whole town assembled to hear the message of the Lord. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to oppose what Paul was saying by insulting him. Then Paul and Barnabas boldly said: “It was necessary that God’s message be spoken to you first. But since you reject it, and consider yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. And this is what the Lord has commanded us: I have appointed you as a light for the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the ends of the earth. **When the Gentiles heard this, they rejoiced and glorified the message of the Lord, and all who had been appointed to eternal life believed.**” (Acts 13:46-48, my accentuation of verse 48).

Although this passage does not contain the words ‘predestined’ or ‘elected’, it has been a critical text for the Calvinistic understanding that God arbitrarily selected some for salvation while rejecting others (People’s New Testament; Robertson’s Word Pictures). Let us consider two viewpoints to this effect.

- The Westminster Confession of Faith (1643) affirms the Calvinistic view by stating that “(...) Wherefore, they who are elected (...) are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power through faith, unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.”
- Edwin H. Palmer (2010:35) states “*Here is another text with stunning clarity for whoever will read the Bible without preconceived notions about election.*”

I believe just the opposite is true: It is the stronghold of Calvinist or similar focus in fact that manipulates people to read this portion with preconceived notions about election, producing a predetermined result through titration of the truth. The danger of taking a sentence (verse 48) out of its context and to interpret it as if it stood alone becomes clear once more.

The King James Version uses the word ‘ordained’ and not ‘appointed’ which the Holman’s Christian Standard Bible quoted above uses. Robertson in his Word Pictures (and referring to Hackett) also makes out a case for ‘appointed’ to be the better translation. He continues to point out that the Jews had voluntarily rejected the word of God, while some (and not all) Gentiles gladly accepted that which the Jews had rejected. He finds no evidence that Luke had in mind an absolute or eternal decree of personal salvation. What did transpire as the Spirit of God moved upon the hearts of those present was that some responded in acceptance while others pushed the Spirit away. They were revealed as the subjects of God’s grace by the stand they took for the Lord that day.

Calvin, in his commentary on this verse (e-Sword add-on), declares that “*Therefore, let us hold and mark that which Luke saith, that those were ordained **before** unto life (...).*” Note the inserted word “before,” which does not appear in the text! By similar approach, one could claim that insertion of the words “that day” would be the correct option. However, we are not interested in options, but in the truth of what had originally been written by Luke. **This insertion clearly creates meaning as opposed to truthfully interpreting or forming true understanding of the real meaning.** It cannot simply be regarded as an oversight by Calvin, but should be seen for what it is: deliberate manipulation of the content and thus deceit. Bear in mind that he was writing this at a time the Bible was not freely available to people. They were dependent on the preaching and teaching of the Bible by church leaders.

In the words of Myers (2015), “*(...) though God may order the events which allows a person to hear the message of the*

Gospel, and while God gives eternal life and confers the status of sonship to those who believe, God does not force anyone to believe or restrict others from doing so.” Many Bible scholars follow a similar understanding and agree that the human will to choose remained free. The editors of the *Full Life Study Bible* (Stamps, 1992:1691) for example, point out that verse 46 explicitly emphasises the human responsibility in accepting or rejecting eternal life.

Charles Ellicott, a conservative scholar of the eighteenth century summarised the matter as follows (e-Sword):

As many as were ordained to eternal life believed – Better, as many as were disposed for. The words seem to the English reader to support the Calvinistic dogma of divine decrees as determining the belief or unbelief of men, and it is not improbable, looking to the general drift of the theology of the English Church in the early part of the seventeenth century, that the word “ordained” was chosen as expressing that dogma. It runs, with hardly any variation, through all the chief English versions, the Rhemish giving the stronger form “pre-ordinate.” The Greek word, however, does not imply more than that they fell in with the divine order which the Jews rejected.

Adam Clarke, and eighteenth century British Methodist theologian and Bible scholar refers to the presence of a readiness of mind among the people as opposed to the stubbornness of the Jews who rejected the message. The religious proselytes listened attentively, and received the word of life. Unlike the Jews, they were glad to hear that, in the order of God, the Gentiles were included in the covenant of salvation through Christ Jesus. In this good state and order of mind, they believed.

Clarke is adamant that of all the meanings ever put on the Greek word *tássō* (Strong’s no. G5021) used here by Luke, none agrees worse with its nature and known signification than that it implied one’s predestination to eternal life: this is no meaning of the term, and should never be applied to it (e-Sword).

In his dictionary, W.E. Vine (1996:33-34) describes the word *tássō* in the sense of “to place in order, arrange.” He notes Acts 13:48 in this regard and refers to the expression’s usage in 1 Corinthians 16:15, where it is stated that the house of Stephanas at Corinth “set themselves” to the ministry of the saints. The King James Version renders the latter “addicted themselves.” Vine clearly supports the views of Stamps, Ellicott and Clarke.

The true position described here by Luke will receive more attention in the next chapter as I consider the question of the elect in Paul’s letters. For the moment it would be sufficient to call upon John 3:16-17 for support of the view that the human’s free will to choose remained a present reality at all times where the Gospel was preached, whether to the Jews or to the Gentiles.

It is interesting to note that, according to Jude (verse 6), the angels too had a free will to follow God’s way:

(...) and He has kept, with eternal chains in darkness for the judgment of the great day, angels who did not keep their own position but deserted their proper dwelling.

THE CHOSEN IN THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

The Epistle of James is widely accepted as the oldest letter in the New Testament, having been written around 45 AD. James states that God has chosen (*eklektos*) the poor of this world, but rich in faith. Once more the context does not indicate pre-chosen or predestined individual believers. At the same time one needs to understand that James does not elevate the poor above the rich in their position as chosen of God. He is not describing the measure of the poor’s faith, by which one man may be richer than another, but the substance of their faith, by virtue of which every believer is rich (Wiesinger cited in Vincent, e-Sword).

This understanding takes one back again to John. 3:16-18 and 14:6, for example. Through their faith the poor are before

God equal to the rich who also believe. And of course the poor and rich who reject the Messiah are equal too before God. Paul described this principle in his second Epistle to the Corinthians: “*From now on, then, we do not know anyone in a purely human way. Even if we have known Christ in a purely human way, yet now we no longer know Him like that. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come*” (5:16-17).

The credentials before God are to be in Christ; in other words, to be part of the community of those who believe in Him. Here there is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. All are one in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:28; Eph 2:15).

THE ELECT AND ELECTION ACCORDING TO PETER

Peter’s first Epistle starts as an address to people whom he calls temporary residents (or strangers) in five geographical Roman regions (roughly the northern half of modern Turkey). They were probably predominantly Gentile with a Jewish element in view of the references to their pagan background combined with frequent use of Old Testament references (HCSB: 1805; Wallace, 2000:9).

In his address Peter describes them as “*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ (...)*” (1 Pet 1:1-2, KJV). The Holman Christian Standard Bible uses the word ‘chosen’ instead of ‘elect’. The Greek word is once again *eklektos*. The word translated ‘foreknowledge,’ is the Greek *prognosis*. Zodhiates, in his word study, describes the concept as a prior acknowledgement, favourable recognition or consideration beforehand. It is used to denote the foreordained fellowship of God with the objects of His saving power. **I understand this to show God’s consideration beforehand**

that He would reconcile and fellowship with those who choose to believe in His Messiah and not of predestined individuals in the sense of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. Though God foresees who would believe, He does not force it. This reconciliation and fellowship is a position believers enjoy through the presence of the Holy Spirit, the *Paraclete*, who once more walks beside the human as God originally did in Eden.

In the second chapter Peter explains Christ to them as a chosen and valuable cornerstone for those who believe in Him and a rock that trips those who do not. It is a letter of encouragement reminding the believers of important doctrinal truths about God and salvation. They were called to follow in the steps of Christ (2:21). Their endurance of suffering would bring favour with God. Peter closes his letter with a specific mention again that they were called to God's eternal glory in Christ Jesus.

Some interpret this letter as showing that suffering is a God-decreed part of a Christian's life. Of course this is not a true biblical principle. Peter was referring to **that generation of believers who were the vehicle through which the Gospel of the Kingdom of God became established in the known world (and eventually beyond). This is what that generation had been predestined or chosen for.** In the process he knew some would have great suffering and history confirms this, of which the persecution of Christians by Nero is the prime example. Peter's mention of the church in Babylon (referring to Jerusalem) as elect together with them (KJV) or also chosen (HCSB) reinforces the fact that he had groups of believers of his time in mind and not predestined individuals of all ages past, then present and yet to come.

Peter's second Epistle accentuates the importance of holding firmly to truth in the face of false teaching that would confront them. They were to supplement their calling and election, their acceptance of the divine invitation to the kingdom of God and its privileges, their faith, by a number of cascading qualities –

one leading to another. The false teachers were people who had been drawn by the knowledge of Christ, but had since returned to the ways of unrighteousness. Instead, the believers Peter wrote to were to grow in the grace and (relational) knowledge of Jesus Christ (and not in the knowledge of theology or the traditions of Judaism's religious leaders of their time):

For His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. By these He has given us very great and precious promises, so that through them you may share in the divine nature, escaping the corruption that is in the world because of evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with goodness, goodness with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with godliness, godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they will keep you from being useless or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The person who lacks these things is blind and shortsighted, and has forgotten the cleansing from his past sins. Therefore, brothers, make every effort to confirm your calling and election, because if you do these things you will never stumble (2 Pet 1:3-10).

This message describes a principle for all believers throughout the ages to come. Peter concluded his letter by exhorting them again with the same words to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Saviour Jesus Christ.

THE ELECT LADY IN 2 JOHN

A significant characteristic of Jesus of Nazareth's approach was that he openly invited women to follow him. This was contrary to most first-century cultures, in which women were isolated and even discriminated against. John's second epistle is addressed to the "(...) *the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth (...)*."

The *Word In Life Study Bible* (1996:2289) accentuates the fact that the identity of this lady is unknown. While some believe it was an individual woman, others regard it as symbolic, referring to a group of believers which might have been the *Ekklesia* (or assembly, congregation) at Ephesus. John warned her (or them) to guard against deceivers who did not bring the true gospel. His use of the word *eklektos* (elect) is clear reference to her position as a believer.

John ends his epistle with greetings from the children of her elect sister. Once again, there is no clarity on identity; but she was undoubtedly also a follower (or *Ekklesia* of followers) of Christ in the true gospel.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

This chapter lifted us from the Old Testament environment and its clear indications of elect individuals, groups and a nation – focussing on election for specific purposes by God – into the New Testament world. Paul’s letters were not discussed, as they are the focus of the next chapter.

In the process, some concepts that are interpreted by authors in the Calvinistic environment to undergird the doctrines of election were explained in their true sense. They do not support those doctrines.

An important connection that this chapter has brought the reader to is the central role of that specific generation living in the time of Jesus in His earthly ministry, and also of His Apostles. They were foreknown and chosen as the generation that would see the Gospel of the Kingdom of God taken into to the known world of their time.

If the popular election doctrines are true, it seems strange that Jesus of Nazareth, God’s ultimate prophet, did not teach such a core doctrine. I find it difficult to reconcile the Gospel of the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached with its absence if it were true.

I need to draw the attention to Calvin's manipulation of Acts 13:48's content and accentuate the fact again that it was published at a time (the year 1536) when the average household did not yet possess a Bible. They would be largely dependent on their church leaders to learn the Bible's content. Such content insertion can hardly be explained as being an unfortunate interpretation error.

The same approach is found in Calvin's presentation of Ezekiel 36:26 (Institutes III, chapter 24, section 16). After maintaining in section 15 that that the wicked perish by God's ordination, which implies predestination, Calvin challenges his opponents by applying Ezekiel as follows: "*Conversion is undoubtedly in the hand of God, whether he designs to convert all can be learned from himself, when he promises that he will give a certain few a heart of flesh but leave the rest with a heart of stone.*"

Compare his rendition above with the following quotes from two Bible versions:

²²Therefore, say to the house of Israel: This is what the Lord GOD says: (...) ²⁶I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh (HCSB).

²²Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; (...) ²⁶A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh (KJV).

Just to make sure of their correctness, I also consulted the 1917 English translation of the Jewish Tanakh and found it to be similar to the King James Version. They all confirm the manipulation of the Bible's meaning by Calvin through the insertion of words supporting his view into the content. All of this underlines why there rests such a heavy responsibility on every one of us not to blindly believe what authors write (and I include my writings), but to test it against the Bible. Modern

information technology and the availability through it of books from centuries ago provide us with the ability to do so to much greater extent than had previously been possible. We should not neglect such a privileged position.

THE PRINCIPLE OF ELECTION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT – PART 2

PAUL'S EPISTLES

Twenty-one of the New Testament's 27 books are epistles (or letters). Although each one is identified with a specific author, the authorship of several, especially among those traditionally presented as Paul's epistles, are often questioned or debated. For the purposes of this book all thirteen epistles generally ascribed to Paul are accepted as such without debate as it would not make any difference to the outcome. They are the Letter to the Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, 1 Timothy, Titus and 2 Timothy (the sequence of their writing).

The contributors of an article, *Paul The Apostle*, (Wikipedia, 22 October 2007) declare that Paul's influence on Christian thinking has arguably been more significant than any other New Testament author. His influence can be seen in the main works representing Christian thought through the centuries. It is therefore not surprising to find that the most important Scripture foundations of the predestination and election doctrines come from Paul's letters.

Only Luke, whose two books make up nearly a third of the New Testament, has contributed more than Paul to the New Testament. One also meets Paul in Luke's account of the Acts of the Apostles, enabling the scholar to compare the

account of Paul's life according to the book of Acts with his own account in his various letters which were largely written to ecclesiae (or congregations) he had founded or visited. I accentuate this reality against the backdrop that there are 33 named assemblies or congregations of Christian believers in the New Testament. The history of the apostles show that there had been many more by the time they had died.

These letters are full of expositions of what Christians should believe and how they should live. Paul's epistles undoubtedly provide the earliest systematic account of Christian doctrine, as well as information on the life of the infant 'Church.' (I accentuate the word 'church' because it is not a realistic translation of the word '*ekklesia*' used in the Bible manuscripts). To weigh their content correctly it is also essential to keep in mind that Paul's letters do not appear in our Bible according to the sequence they were written in. I will be following this sequence in dealing with the letters.

Evidence indicates that the letter to the Galatians was his first (written in 49 AD) and 2 Timothy the last (some 15 years later). The letter is widely accepted as one to the congregations in the Roman political province of Galatia (Wallace:2004). Some scholars (e.g. Batchelor, 1993: 155) also regard the Epistle to the Ephesians as one intended to circulate around several churches. It therefore does not contain the characteristic personal messages and not all the ancient manuscripts mention Ephesus as the letter's destination. It may mark the final stage of the development of Paul's theology.

Looking at the terms 'elect', 'election' and 'predestinated,' they are found most in the writings of Paul (in seven of his epistles). In the same breath one should note the variations in different English translations. This poses a direct demand to the truth seeker to study the Greek words used in each instance and then to seek the understanding that the original recipients would have had. So, we are required again to find the proper cultural, historical, literary, geographical and theological context for the specific content we are trying to understand correctly.

What does stand out in Paul's letters is that he generally deals with believers in their manifestation as a community, as an assembly of Christian believers. One finds this as he addresses expectations of an imminent return of Christ in judgement upon Jerusalem and the Jewish nation, as well as his focus on election and predestination. This is a characteristic which cannot be ignored in the reading of his letters without the danger of creating content above and beyond what has been written.

Paul generally deals with believers in their manifestation as a community of Christian believers, as an assembly.

Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians even before he met with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem (Acts 15:6) – generally known as the Jerusalem Council. Its purpose was to refute the false gospel brought to them by Judaizers – Jewish ‘Christians’ who insisted that circumcision was essential to salvation. While it is one of Paul's more comprehensive letters, one does not find the concept of predestination (or elect and election) in it. **Considering that circumcision as requirement to salvation is being reprimanded, the absence of a message of predestination to salvation as counter argument seems to stand out – that is, if such a principle were true indeed.**

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy: To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace. We always thank God for all of you, remembering you constantly in our prayers. We recall, in the presence of our God and Father, your work of faith, labor of love, and endurance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing your election, brothers loved by God (1 Thess 1:1-4).

Being Paul's first use of the term 'election,' it is important to note that it does not receive prominent attention in commentaries and other writings. I focus on it specifically as the application of the 'first mention' principle in Paul's works.

In his commentary Calvin states that Paul here infers the Thessalonian believers had been specially called with evidences of a sure election. He continues that those who declare one obtains salvation by faith without eternal predestination of God which distinguishes between believers and reprobates, are acting perversely (Calvin: e-Sword).

One does not have to do an extensive analysis of this Scripture portion to conclude that there is no reference at all by Paul to election by God based on eternal predestination. This is probably why few give much attention to this verse. Calvin's brief discussion clearly goes far above what Paul had written.

Based on the succeeding context (1:5-8), I agree with Vincent's understanding that Paul was indicating to the Thessalonians they had been chosen to be members of the Christian assembly and their conduct had justified the choice. It therefore simply means they had been accepted as members of the local ecclesia or assembly (Vincent, e-Sword). The People's New Testament (e-Sword) notes that the expression 'election' is simply another way of saying 'knowing that you have become Christians.' (When Paul wrote this letter believers in Christ Jesus had already become known as 'Christians' - Acts 11:26).

'Election' was just another way in which Paul said they had become Christians.

Ellicott (e-Sword) describes his understanding from the language of Paul (as well as Peter) primarily as a reference to gracious admission into religious privileges in this life. The word does not describe the final condition of a person, who has it in his or her own hands to unsettle this 'election,' or to make it

sure. Although Ellicott does not declare so outright, this would of course imply the presence of a free will to choose Christ.

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

After describing the coming of the “lawless one” and the unrighteous deception he would endeavour to bring into their (the Thessalonians’) life, Paul goes on to write,

But we must always thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God has chosen you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth (2 Thess 2:13).

This verse is often presented as proof of God’s (pre-) election unto salvation. Some also interpret the expression “from the beginning” as if it referred to the beginning of creation. Let us look at important contextual aspects of this Scripture portion.

Like most of Paul’s letters, the two to the Thessalonian assembly were pastoral letters directed at very specific needs of those believers. The first letter emphasised the fact that the gospel was brought to them by Paul (1 Thess 1:4, 9). Verse 13 quoted above was expanded by Paul in the very next two:

He called you to this through our gospel, so that you might obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions you were taught, either by our message or by our letter (2 Thess 2:14, 15).

With the expression ‘the beginning’ in verse 13, Paul was clearly reminding them to their first contact with the gospel he brought, when they believed. The intrinsic, original meaning of the Greek word *kaléō* (Strong no. G2564) that has been rendered ‘called’ in verse 14, was the act of inviting someone to something and thus to participate in and enjoy it. Thayer, in his Greek-English Lexicon of 1885 presents its use in the Epistles by Paul and Peter of God **inviting** men by the preaching of the

gospel to the blessings of the heavenly kingdom. I was amazed to find how this core meaning of an invitation has been ignored in Bible commentaries and even Greek word studies.

The word translated “chosen” (Greek *hairéomai*, Strong no. G138) in the verse we are looking into is a rare one in the New Testament. It is used only in this verse in relation to a choice of God. However, the intrinsic meaning is **to take for oneself**, which would be the correct translation here. In other words, after the Thessalonians heard the gospel preached by Paul, they believed (accepted God’s invitation) and were consequently taken by God for Himself. Once again I recognise how important the true correct context is to understand the Scriptures without stretching or philosophising meaning into it.

Someone once remarked that nothing else ruins the truth like stretching it.

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

The letter to the Romans (written some 7 years later) and the one to the Ephesians written another four years later, provide primary or foundational portions of Scripture on which the predestination and election doctrines are argued. After his second letter to the Thessalonians and before the one to the Romans, Paul also wrote two to the Corinthians. The concepts we are looking into are not found in these two.

An important characteristic of Paul’s letter to the Romans is that he explains at length believers in Christ Jesus are saved by grace through Christ’s death and no longer by observing the law. Chapter 7 deals specifically with the relationship between the (Mosaic and extended priestly) law and sin and is followed in Chapter 8 by a discussion of life in the Spirit.

Romans 8

This is one of only two instances in which Paul used the concept of predestination (the other is found in his letter to the Ephesians written four years later):

We know that all things work for the good of those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose. For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers. And those He predestined, He also called; and those He called, He also justified; and those He justified, He also glorified (Rom 8:28-30).

Romans 8:28-33 present an important textual portion for Calvinists on the topic of predestination. John Piper, a well-known (hyper) Calvinist for example, calls it “(...) the most important text of all in relation to the teaching of Unconditional Election” (2013:58). To back up his statement he presents several arguments among which there is the following core explanation:

Notice that Romans 8:30 says, “And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” Focus for a moment on the fact that all whom God calls he also justifies.

This calling in verse 30 is not given to all people. The reason we know it’s not is that *all* those who are called are also justified. There is an infallible connection between called and justified. (...) But all people are not justified. Therefore all are not called.

Piper’s whole discussion in his chapter on unconditional election is a glaring example of careless theological philosophy (or is it philosophical theology?) at work. In his second last paragraph (p. 61) he states that “*if you are a believer in Christ, you have been loved by God from all eternity. He set his favor on you before the creation of the world.*” However, note that the

expression “*creation of the world*” is found only in Romans 1:20 in the Bible (KJV), where it appears in the context of the human unrighteousness. Piper’s usage here appears to be a careless substitution of Paul’s “*before the foundation of the world*” from Ephesians 1:4.

I have already pointed out previously (p15-16) that the event and principle of the **founding of Israel as a nation** is described in the Scriptures as the **planting of the heavens and laying of the earth’s foundation** (Isa 51:16). In Hebraic thought the giving of the Torah to the Hebrew nation at Mount Sinai, commonly called the Law of God, was regarded by them as the completion of the original creation described in Genesis 1. I find the ignorance of theologians and Bible teachers in this regard quite surprising. On the other hand it should probably not, as I know how strong tradition and denominational directives can be.

Piper’s statement that the calling (or more accurately then, invitation) is not given to all people brings Jesus’ parable about the wedding banquet to mind (Matt 22:1-14). After those who had initially been invited did not want to come, the king sent out his slaves to go to where the roads exit the city and **invite everyone they found** to the banquet. So the slaves went out and gathered everyone they found, both evil and good (verses 9 & 10). For me, this is quite vivid declaration by Jesus the Christ that all people had indeed been invited.

The words rendered ‘called,’ ‘bidden’ and ‘bid’ in verses 4, 8 and 9 of the King James Version are all the Greek word *kaléō*, indicating an invitation to participate in and enjoy the wedding banquet for the king’s son. This lack of the true, clear meaning has been corrected in the New King James Version.

Romans 8 does not refer back to time before or at the creation and equipping of the earth described in Genesis 1.

Those who love God

Let us consider the content of Romans 8:28-31 carefully and within proper context. First, the Romans are informed that all things work for the good of those who love God; and those are the ones called (or invited) according to His purpose. The word ‘called’ here is the Greek *klētós* (Strong’s no. G2822) and its original usage was to designate those invited to a banquet (Zodhiates). Within the broader Gospel context, the expression ‘those who love God’ should be understood as synonymous with ‘followers of Christ’ (People’s New Testament).

Any doctrine stating that this refers to a predetermined group of individuals (even a minority according to some), would therefore imply that when God decided to create the human, it was with the purpose to be loved by only some of them throughout human history. Such notion cries out against the creation record and God’s declaration of creating the human after His own image, as well as the statement afterwards that He saw all He had made as very good (Gen 1:31).

According to His purpose

One needs to bear in mind that Paul was writing to people who believed in Jesus the Christ and who were facing severe testing and trials as a result of their faith. He wanted to encourage them not only by explaining that nothing could separate them from God’s love and purpose in their lives, but also stating what that purpose was: “*For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers.*”

It is important to note that there is neither a reference to salvation (or heaven) nor eternal damnation (or hell) at all. The purpose is, however, to eventual Christlikeness – conformed to the image of Christ, the Son of God. This is similar to Paul’s message to the Thessalonians (2 Thess 2:14).

Throughout Paul’s letters one finds a contextual focus on the group, the community. His consistent use of ‘we’ and ‘us’ testifies to such understanding. Where individuals are concerned

it is mostly as part of the community of believers in Christ. There is no difference here.

Foreknowledge should be understood here specifically as God's covenant-giving decision to bestow love upon the human race throughout the ages to come and redeem them through Christ (e.g. John 3:16; Rom 5:8; Eph 2:7). God's foreknowledge (or forelove) is presented here by Paul as it is elsewhere in the New Testament, within the setting of the broader community of believers (Stamps, 1992: 1745). All who accept God's invitation are justified, their sins blotted out in Christ. It does therefore not imply or show a pre-creation decision of God about whom to give eternal life, but about God's focus on those who would eventually accept the Christ he would send to the world ('world' to be understood as humanity):

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He did not even spare His own Son, but offered Him up for us all; how will He not also with Him grant us everything? Who can bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the One who justifies. Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the One who died, but even more, has been raised; He also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us (Rom 8:31-34).

The term 'predestination' is an expression of God's eternal compassion which He had decided on before. It does not release the individual of the exercise of his own free will to accept Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life. Every believer, however, will eventually be conformed to the image of Christ. In the words of Godet (1893: 108-110), *The predestination of which Paul speaks is not a predestination to faith, but a predestination to glory, founded on the provision of faith (...) What the decree of predestination embraces is the realization of the image of the Son in all foreknown [that is, foreloved] believers.*" These would be those who love God through accepting His Christ as the Redeemer sent among humanity as the Way, the Truth and the Life.

It is interesting to find Calvin also denies that predestination should be understood here to refer to ‘secret election’ of believers by God. He regards predestination as posterior to such election. For him the concept referred to the cross God’s people would be required to bear. These afflictions are nothing else than the manner by which they are conformed to the image of Christ (Calvin’s Commentaries, Vol. 38: 1847-50).

Doctrines are supposed to help us understand things that we cannot find so clearly in the Bible and not to create or increase confusion.

Romans 9–11

In Romans 9–11 Paul is dealing with Israel’s past election, their present (at that time) rejection of Christ, and their future salvation. Whereas they pursued the law for righteousness, they had not achieved the purpose of the law. Gentiles, however, have obtained righteousness that comes from faith. The core verses used to assume that every person has been designated within a strict pattern of salvation and condemnation that has been worked out in the long distant past are the following:

(...) when Rebekah became pregnant by Isaac our forefather (for though they had not been born yet or done anything good or bad, so that God’s purpose according to election might stand, not from works but from the One who calls) she was told: **The older will serve the younger.** As it is written: **Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.**

In his commentary Calvin confusingly concludes that as the blessing of the covenant separates the nation of Israel from all other people, so the election of God makes a distinction between men in that nation. **Some are predestined to salvation, others to eternal condemnation.** *“The Lord in his gratuitous election is free and exempt from the necessity of imparting equally the*

same grace to all; but, on the contrary, he passes whom he wills, and whom he wills he chooses” (Calvin, Commentaries on the Bible: e-Sword).

This interpretation leaves no doubt that Calvin sees Jacob and Esau as two individuals who have been elected, one to God’s favour and the other to eternal condemnation even before they were born. As I pointed out in an earlier chapter, their mention should be understood as indicating the two nations coming from them and not the two individuals *per se*. Paul’s argumentation here is not about two individuals, but God’s dealings with men and nations according to history and dispensations. The evil deeds done by the Edomites (descendants of Esau) to the Israelites are well documented in the Old Testament (e.g. Num 20). It is in this foreknowledge that God chose Jacob and later declared through the prophet Malachi that He hated Esau – the nation of Edom - as a country or nation.

In his note regarding Paul’s argument in Romans 9, 10 and 11, M. R. Vincent (1888) acknowledged these chapters as the most difficult of Paul’s writings. They have consequently been most misunderstood and misapplied. Vincent shows that they do not discuss a doctrine of individual election and reprobation with reference to eternal destiny, but are aimed at the Jews’ national and religious conceit. While they claim to be God’s elect people, the great mass among them have been rejected by God, while God’s elective purpose also included the Gentiles. Israel’s failure was not due to an arbitrary decision of God, but was the fruit of their own attitude of wilful disobedience and rejection of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God that had come upon them.

After explaining to the Romans that righteousness was by faith alone and that Christ was the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believed, Paul also accentuated that Israel’s rejection was not total. Regarding election, they remained loved by God because of their forefathers. As the Romans (and other

Gentiles, of course) once disobeyed God, but now have found mercy through Israel's disobedience, so Israel would also one day receive mercy. God's heart is to have mercy on all (Rom 11:28-32).

My study of these three chapters has certainly accentuated once again how critically important it is to read Scripture within the full context at hand and to avoid applying an approach of proof-texting; that is, to take single verses or portions out of its context in order to create or support a 'Biblical truth.'

Ephesians 1

⁴for He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love ⁵He predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ for Himself, according to His favor and will, ⁶to the praise of His glorious grace that He favored us with in the Beloved. ⁷In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace ⁸that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. ⁹He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure that He planned in Him ¹⁰for the administration of the days of fulfillment — to bring everything together in the Messiah, both things in heaven and things on earth in Him. ¹¹In Him we were also made His inheritance, predestined according to the purpose of the One who works out everything in agreement with the decision of His will, ¹²so that we who had already put our hope in the Messiah might bring praise to His glory. ¹³In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation— in Him when you believed — were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit (Eph 1:4-13).

The portion 'according to His favor and will' in verse 5 of the above Holman Christian Standard Version, is rendered 'according to the good pleasure of his will' in the King James Version. One should understand this to indicate it was done according to God's purpose. Paul did not write, as some

interpret, that God took pleasure in condemning people to eternal torment even before they had been born.

I have already explained the Hebraic understanding of ‘the foundation of the world’ as referring to the event when the Mosaic Covenant was given to Israel at Mount Sinai. That so many commentators and theologians do not know this, or perhaps choose to ignore its reality and significance, is truly sad as it is such a huge contributing factor to the unbiblical Calvinistic doctrine of election and predestination.

In verse 10 Paul refers to “*the administration of the days of fulfillment*” (HCSB) or “*the dispensation of the fullness of times*” (KJV). The Greek word translated as ‘times’ here is *kairos*. Within the culture that Paul was part of, this represented a circular concept. In Galatians 4:4 a different word is used in Paul’s statement about the fullness of time. In that case it is *chronos*. Whereas *chronos* indicated a specific (straight) time line, *kairos* described a season. ‘Fullfilment’ or ‘fullness’ designated a position of completion – the purpose of the Law and the messages of the Prophets would be completed (See also Matt 5:17 in this regard).

Throughout Paul’s letters he largely addresses the group or corporate situation. Here he accentuates his focus on the corporate with the connection of the *kairos*, the dispensation they were finding themselves in. This is the New Covenant Messianic dispensation awaiting the total destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple prophesied by Jesus (Matt 24) and which was an imminent expectation in Paul’s letters.

Biblical historian, Robert Wilkins, quoted by Ben Witherington (2007:11), quite rightly points out that Christianity was not in the first instance a movement generated by texts, but rather one generated by oral proclamation in a largely oral culture and by the making of personal contacts and the building of personal relationships – the creating of community.

Paul’s overarching focus during his ministry was that special community – the elect and predestined generation

(and not individuals) who would be the vehicle for the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to be taken into the world.

Even the persecution of these believers by Caesar Nero and others were focused not on individuals (e.g. leaders), but on the total Christian community.

Colossians 3:12

Therefore, God's chosen ones ('elect' in the KJV) holy and loved, put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

We have here a concise description of the lifestyle of those who were regarded as members of the community of believers in Christ. In my one notebook I wrote the following observation by an anonymous person to someone called Diognetus, dating back to the second century as far as I could determine: *"They have their own kind of citizenship. They love everyone, but are persecuted by all. They are short of everything and yet have plenty of all things. Their names are blackened and yet they are cleared. They are treated outrageously and behave respectfully to others. To put it simply – the soul is to the body as Christians are to the world."* Does this not reflect Paul's teaching quoted above?

1 & 2 Timothy; Titus

The only mention of 'elect' in Paul's first letter to Timothy is a reference to the elect angels of God, in the sense of being witness to Paul's instructions for Timothy to observe without prejudice or partiality.

Paul's second letter to Timothy and his letter to Titus each has a single reference to the elect in their position as believers in Jesus Christ.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

There can be no doubt that Paul had a more significant influence on the expansion and development of Christian thinking and the Christian church than any other New Testament author. Descriptions of what Christians should believe and how they should live are found in various portions of his letters (e.g. Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3).

The terms ‘elect,’ ‘election’ and ‘predestination’ are found most in Paul’s letters. My study of Paul’s use of these terms has convinced me that Paul was not propagating the later Calvinistic interpretation of an unconditional, predetermined election of some people to salvation and others to eternal condemnation.

Among the important lessons I experienced once again, was the necessity of doing proper word study in order to overcome the misconceptions that are so easily created by our Western mindset and culture. One such instance is the reality of an invitation where terms such as ‘called’ and ‘calling’ have been used in our English translations.

Understanding Hebrew idioms and images such as the ‘foundation of the world’ correctly accentuated another important lesson. The doctrines of election and predestination are proof of the pollution that develops if one does not make the effort to understand and apply such background realities.

The third important reality coming from Paul’s letters that I wish to accentuate is the fact that he generally deals with believers in their manifestation as a community or assembly of ones who believe in Jesus Christ. His focus was that special community who were the generation elected or chosen to take the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world.

CONDEMNATION TO AN ETERNAL FURNACE CALLED HELL – IS IT BIBLICAL?

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

I grew up, as most of this book's readers probably did, with this terrifying concept of the hell, a place of eternal torment. You either believed in Jesus the Christ, or you would go to this fiery hell to burn forever. Preaching, whether formal in the church or informal in discussions between people, often took on the form of 'hell' statements. The visual media also confronted us increasingly with pictures of this awful place of ever burning lava. Whenever we encountered the word 'hell' in the Bible, this was the image we saw. Bible translations continued to lead us along this way.

In the past decades video material and television broadcasts especially, entrenched the concepts even more with reports by people who had allegedly been to hell. I do not look upon such people's intense spiritual experiences in a derogatory way, but do believe that their visions had been fed by the subconscious mind from the traditions they had been taught. I have had intense spiritual experiences too, but I believe the Bible (correctly understood) should be the plumb-line against which any doctrine, teaching or vision is to be tested.

Slowly but surely I started to realise that we are often caught in a grip of wrong understanding. Revelation 20:13 & 14, for

example, read as follows in the King James Version: “*And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and **hell** delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and **hell** were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*” These translation errors have been corrected in the New King James Version, with the word hell having been replaced by the Greek word *hades*, meaning the ‘realm of the dead’ in English.

It was certainly a huge disillusionment for me at age 70 to realise that the concept of hell is actually unbiblical. Because eternal punishment in a place called hell features so prominently in interpretations of the election and predestination doctrines, it is necessary to weigh the concept carefully against the Bible.

TRANSLATION ERROR

One does not find the expression ‘hell’ in the English translation of the Hebrew Tanakh (Old Testament Scriptures).

What we do have in these portions of the Scriptures is the old dispensation concept of a temporary destination for the soul at one’s death here on earth, called *sheol* in Hebrew (Old Testament) and *hades* in Greek (New Testament). *Sheol/Hades* was understood in the Old Hebrew Covenant Dispensation to be a temporary holding place (or prison) in which the souls of the deceased were held in two divisions or sections (the righteous and unrighteous) with an unbridgeable separation between them. Here they awaited the resurrection and judgment that would come on the prophesied Day of the Lord (see Mal 4:1, for example). The image is described in 1 Kings 2:10, for example: “*So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David*” (King James Version). The New English Translation renders this verse, “*Then David passed away and was buried in*

the city of David.” As you can see the image or idea of ‘sleeping with his fathers’ has completely disappeared.

Such unfortunate translations in various Bible versions have not only hidden the concept in its correct biblical applications from us, but have also contributed to the continued embedding of the false doctrine in our minds.

WORD STUDY AND CONCEPT BACKGROUND

Internet searches indicate different explanations for the presence of the hell concept in the Christian environment. For the purposes of this article it is sufficient to state that the modern concept of the hell was introduced over time from pagan mythology into Christian doctrine. The word is used 31 times in the Old Testament of the King James Bible to translate the Hebrew *sheol*. According to this mythology it was the place where demons and the spirits of the deceased were to be found. Statements by so-called “church fathers” and other leaders in the early church seemingly contributed to the establishment of a fear mentality by which control was exercised over the people.

The expression ‘hell’ is found in versions of the New Testament. Here it is commonly used to translate three different Greek words, viz. *Hades*, *Gehenna* en *Tartarus*. Let us examine these expressions and their use in New Testament writings.

Tartarus

This word is used in 2 Peter 2:4 only and refers to a dark holding place for the angels that sinned against God, awaiting their judgement.

Hades

The word *Hades* is found eleven times and also carries the meaning of the realm of the dead. There is no reference to the presence of Satan, demons or eternal torment of the human soul. The resurrection and judgement mentioned in Revelation 20 was the Old Covenant Judgement that took place with the presence (second coming; *Parousia*) of Jesus in judgement and

destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, forty years after His crucifixion. After this event one does not find references to a temporary domain of the deceased again. *Hades* was destroyed (Rev 20:14). The concepts of the resurrection and judgement which would come was therefore rooted in the concept of *sheol/hades* and were completed with its destruction. (Our article on the Great White Throne Judgement expands on these concepts. It is available on the hoseaconnection.org website).

Read Daniel 12 as well. It also refers to the end of that dispensation. Note the statement in Daniel 12:1,2: " *and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*" It is important to note that this is a prophecy to the Old Covenant people Israel – actually the tribe of Judah - and not to other nations and people. Neither is there any mention of eternal torment in a place called hell. The word translated as 'contempt' does not describe a position of eternal torment, only everlasting abhorrence.

Gehenna

Whereas *sheol/hades* referred to a temporary destination for the deceased souls, the concept of *gā-Hinnom* (Hebrew) and *géenna* (*Gehenna*; Greek) indicated a place or condition of eternal judgement and desolation.

This Greek word is found 12 times. Some sources describe *gā-Hinnom* (*Ge-Hinnom*) as a valley outside Jerusalem that became the local rubbish dump, where even the carcasses of dead animals and bodies of executed criminals were dumped and where the fire was never extinguished – the typical image ascribed to the concept of the hell. According to reports I have read this is not supported by archaeological diggings. Others describe it as the place where apostate Jews sacrificed their children as burnt offerings to the idol Molech (e.g. Lev 20:4). Whichever description is the correct one, sources generally agree that this place and concept became a symbol of damnation

for the Jews over time. It became associated as a place of bodily and spiritual punishment for all evil people.

One does not find the Hebrew concept of *Gehenna* being preached or taught to the Gentiles by the apostles anywhere in the New Testament.

Yes, James used the word in his epistle, but it is important to note that it was addressed to the twelve Jewish tribes in the dispersion. He also used it only as a symbol of the tongue as source of unrighteousness (Jas 3:6).

Jesus used the concept in connection with judgement, but it was in discussions with Jewish audiences only and was descriptive of God's coming judgement upon Jerusalem.

This *Gehenna* judgement was eventually fulfilled in the year 70 AD with the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Roman army. Sources show this destruction was so complete that it took some 200 years before any significant development took place in that site again. (You can read more on this in our website article *The New Jerusalem*).

THE SECOND DEATH

In His discussion with the twelve disciples before sending them out (Matt 10:28), Jesus noted that only God could destroy the human soul. The Greek word *apollumi*, translated 'perish' in John 3:16, implies **complete cessation of existence** (Zodhiates: Strong's no. H1860).

Considering the fact of the Revelation 20:13-14 declaration that death and *hades* were cast into the lake of fire (i.e. destroyed) after the Great White Throne Judgement, **it seems** (my assumption as it is not spelt out) that the New Testament person who rejects Christ in this life, already receives the second death when he/she dies on earth. Such a person's earthly death therefore means a complete and final death – *apollumi* by own choice, complete cessation of bodily and spiritual existence, something that can only be granted by the Creator of life. Even

then, so I believe, everyone who so chooses grieves God, as the Scripture declares in John 3:17 that He did not send His Son to the world [*i.e. humanity*] to judge them, but in order to give them redemption.

There simply are no Scriptural grounds to believe such a person is handed over to eternal torment. Such teachings (doctrines) are human philosophies supported by poor translations. The position becomes even worse if the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination and election is brought into the picture. That would imply we are asked to believe that God decided before the creation of the earth, to make the human in His image, but at the same time decided to condemn some of them through the ages to eternal torment. As I noted before, there are even those who twist the message of Jesus about the wide and narrow roads in Matthew 7:14 to imply that this pre-condemned group will make up the far majority of people.

Such errors in teachings or doctrines destroy the integrity of the Bible as source of truth.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

It seems to me from the literature that the concept of the hell developed to some extent during the second and third century AD, but that the major development took place within the Catholic Church environment during the middle ages.

Over the past decades, and even in previous centuries, there have been many writings identifying the false teaching for what it is. Yet it sadly lived on from the church pulpits and of course in the visual media. Various books and other media about alleged visits to hell also find prominent place on the shelves of Christian book stores. Imagine its worldwide influence in shaping the perceptual knowledge of Christian believers.

Ironically, Calvin did not use the expression ‘hell’ in his definition of predestination. Because the expression had become so entrenched as describing a real place to the Christian environment, Calvin’s ‘eternal condemnation’ expression has simply been taken as synonymous with ‘hell.’

How different would the world have been today if the teachings of Jesus the Christ and His apostles had been taught to generation upon generation conscientiously and free of the influence of Greek (and Roman) philosophy. Instead of expanding the relationship based community (*ecclesia*) that Jesus proclaimed, humanity has twisted and adapted the Scriptures into doctrines, producing a new man-made religion in many variations in its place. The concept of the hell is one of the prominent rotten fruits that came forth out of this pollution. The words of Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus the Christ to the religious leaders of Jerusalem has gained even more authority and truth in my view:

“In this way you have revoked God’s word because of your tradition” (Mat 15:6).

CONCLUSION

The doctrines of election and predestination have been described in various unflattering ways through the years. As I noted in the chapter of Introduction, Erickson (1992: 288) labelled it as one of the least understood and most puzzling of all Christian doctrines. He accepts more jokes may have been made about it than about all other Christian doctrines combined. It has even been described as obscure and even bizarre.

Reprobation refers to those whom God passes over and condemns. It is the flip-side of the doctrine of election and has been described as the most despised and hated of all doctrines. I never realised before undertaking this study, just how enormous the confusion is that this twisted and philosophical array of doctrines in all its variations and applications have created.

When Jesus gave what is known today as the Great Commission, He instructed them to *“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you”* (Matt 28:19-20). I do not mean this sarcastically, but I feel compelled to point out that He gave no instructions about developing all kinds of doctrines. Having made this statement, I also accentuate that far too many church doctrines are both confusing and dividing. Some can best be described as outright unbiblical.

Allegedly not to be understood

The chapter of Introduction already referred to statements that the doctrines of election and predestination are not to be understood. Efforts to resolve it would supposedly constitute action that would both deprive God of His glory as only Saviour, and weaken man's sense of responsibility in relation to the acceptance or rejection of Grace.

A.W. Pink (1886-1952) provided the following "wisdom" in his book, *The Doctrine Of Election* (1998:2-3):

The Mystery of Election

That election is a profound mystery, we readily grant; that it is altogether beyond the power of the finite mind to fully comprehend, we freely acknowledge. Our feeling and reasoning faculty cannot aid us in this enquiry. Yet this is no cause why we should refuse to believe what we cannot fully understand.

The Truth of Election

The doctrine of election is clearly [sic] taught in God's Word; from cover to cover, the Bible is full of it. It is one of the great foundational doctrines of the Scriptures.

Considering Pink's statement on the mystery that this doctrine presents, his last observation is very questionable indeed. One finds a principle of clarity throughout the Scriptures, e.g. Deuteronomy 27:8; Habakkuk 2:2; 1 Corinthians 4:6; 1 John 2:21; and Revelation 1:4. The doctrines of election and predestination clearly do not meet this criterion even remotely. They are doctrines (or variations of a doctrine) that have been philosophised into existence. God did not reveal Himself through the Scriptures in order not to be understood!

Two portions of Scripture immediately came to mind as I contemplated the above:

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6).

Are you not deceived because you don't know the Scriptures or the power of God? (Mark 12:24).

The Question of Free Will to choose God

This aspect has been addressed throughout the preceding chapters. I do find it necessary, nonetheless, to bring the matter to finalisation here.

Although Calvin applies extensive reasoning to present his relevant views, it is not uncommon to find apparent contradictions in his writings. While he explains that nothing takes place apart from God's knowing and decreed secret plans, we are not to examine them. The evil man does and that befalls us was sent by God's just dispensation. This evil in the end serves God (Calvin, *Institutes*, Book I, Chapters 6 & 7; Warrick, 2009: 5). In Chapter 21 of Book III of his *Institutes*, Calvin states that "*I admit that it was by their own fault Ishmael, Esau, and others, fell from their adoption; for the condition annexed was, that they should faithfully keep the covenant of God, whereas they perfidiously [faithlessly or treacherously] violated it.*" How can this be interpreted in any other way than the possession of a free will to choose by those persons?

This is an example again of the reality that less than accurate interpretation of the Scriptures may provide a good answer in one place, but it is sure to create contradictions and problems elsewhere. The implication of Calvin's discourses on the matter of man's lack of free will to choose to love God, except he be predestined or elected beforehand to do so, is that God is actually responsible for the doom of every lost sinner. Such an idea cries out against the Scriptures such as Genesis 1:26-28 and John 3:16.

How can I not agree with Thiessen (1949:349) that it would seem very strange for God to call upon people everywhere to

repent (e.g. Acts 17:39; 2 Pe 3:9) and believe (e.g. Mar 1:14-15) when only some are to receive the gift of repentance and faith.

Paul does not hesitate to refer to the new believers' own decision-making ability, using statements such as the following in the letter to the Ephesians (4:21-25):

(...) because the truth is in Jesus: **you took off** your former way of life, the old man that is corrupted by deceitful desires; you are being renewed in the spirit of your minds; **you put on** the new man, the one created according to God's *likeness* in righteousness and purity of the truth. Since **you put away** lying, speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, because we are members of one another (author's accentuation).

Did God predestine the institutional chaos of the church?

Although this is not something that comes directly from Calvinistic literature, it is a plain and simple deduction. It is no secret that the many differences between various Christian groups arise primarily from doctrinal disagreements. The institutional church-world is divided today between numerous denominations and individual 'independent' churches. How can one even begin to reconcile this division with the Gospel of the Kingdom of God that Jesus of Nazareth taught? Where does the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7) fit in?

Jesus Christ did not propagate such a situation and neither did His apostles. One only needs to study church history from the second century onwards and the doctrinal differences between so-called "church fathers" to understand how man-made traditions (or doctrines) created this sad position. Jesus introduced a relationship based assembly of people who loved God and not a new religion or corporate organisation. The epistles of the New Testament flowed forth from these relationships and not the other way round.

How can a house that is divided against itself not fall (Luke 11:17)? What contribution has the division and chaos in the

institutional church made to the chaos the world is in today? And how large has the role of man-made church traditions (doctrines) been in bringing humanity to this point? Is this the sacrificial and redemptive purpose Jesus Christ came to die for?

The answer is an unequivocal No!

A specific elect generation

In the Old Testament we have seen numerous examples of chosen (or elected) individuals, families, groups and also a nation. These were always connected to a specific purpose and with little exception (e.g. Pharaoh and Judas Iscariot perhaps) came with special blessings and promises from the Lord. Even in the case of these two examples, there was a larger purpose to be fulfilled.

The New Testament writings have the same characteristics, but here one finds a primary focus on the larger group – the elect in Christ – the generation of believers who were identified as the followers of Christ. There was no longer a separation between the nation of Israel and the Gentile nations (Eph 2:11-22). All were the Great Shepherd's sheep. A golden thread of righteousness among those who love God is to be seen throughout the Scriptures.

Paul's focus was that special community, the elect generation who were to take the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world. One needs to acknowledge, however, that the strongest and the most direct description in this regard came from Jesus. Answering the questions of His disciples as to when the judgement would come upon Jerusalem and the temple He said that *"I assure you: This generation will certainly not pass away until all these things take place"* (Matt 24:34).

Philosophers and theologians have presented various denials of the simple meaning in this prophetic statement by God's ultimate prophet. The year 70AD, however, saw the fulfilment of this prophecy with the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by the Roman army.

The Elect, the generation predestined thereto when God planted the heavens and laid the foundation of the earth by giving Israel the Mosaic Covenant, was the generation alive on earth at the time of Jesus of Nazareth and of His disciples. That generation lived to be the one through and amongst whom the Gospel of the Kingdom of God was taken into the world. And throughout the centuries to follow there had been numerous attempts to destroy the knowledge and manifestation of that kingdom. But the words of the prophet Daniel that this kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom have been ringing true throughout them all.

The generation of those alive when Jesus of Nazareth walked the earth and of His apostles was the Elect Generation to see the fulfilment or completion of the Law and the Prophets.

Sadly, man-made doctrines of the Christian church, such as the Calvinistic doctrines of election and predestination, have done more damage than all external forces combined to the ability of people to grow in the manifest knowledge of the Living God and to experience the truth of the Kingdom Jesus preached.

Our doctrinal houses have so often been built on the sand of philosophical practices and not on the rock of biblical truth! The institutionalised collapse under the pounding rain of doctrinal differences has been great (Matt 7:24-27). May God forgive us and may the Holy Spirit lead us to rehabilitation and not reformation! The latter concept describes change, but the former cries out for restoration to original position.

ANNEXURE

BIBLICAL HEBREW, HEBRAIC THOUGHT, AND THE STAINS OF GREEK PHILOSOPHY

Hebrew was always a God-centred language, spoken by a God-centred people. Greek, on the other hand, has always been a humanistic language, the language of science, of facts and reason. Whereas Greek is a cold clinical language filled with abstract concepts, always wanting to know how something was possible in scientific terms, Hebrew thought-patterns were vibrant, rich and colourful. Abstract thought was always expressed through concrete ideas - in Hebrew, for example, the mountains could break forth into shouts of joy, and all the trees of the field could clap their hands. It is no wonder then that Martin Luther, struggling to translate the Hebrew Bible into German, realised that it was impossible to convey so much so briefly in any other language.

As I study the Scriptures, weighing what I discover against all my past traditions, I understand more and more that **the revelation of God by God came within a context and not a vacuum.** Western thought patterns are built on the ancient Greek cultural legacy and we try to understand the Scriptures from this point of view. In the process we have become 'destroyed for lack of knowledge.' Our worldview, our beliefs, behaviours and identity, our ideas, practices and attitudes have all been shaped by a Western-minded perspective.

Since I began to understand that I needed to gain a far better understanding of Hebraic thought and culture in order to apply sound, basic principles of interpretation to what I read, I have found a similar approach in the works of writers of long ago. In his Commentary of the New Testament, Bishop John Lightfoot, for example, wrote back in 1658:

- *“For, first, when all the books of the New Testament were written by Jews, and among Jews, and unto them; and when all the discourses made there, were made in like manner by Jews, and to Jews, and among them; I was always fully persuaded, as of a thing past all doubting, that that Testament could not but everywhere taste of and retain the Jews’ style and idiom, form, and rule of speaking.”*
- *”And hence, in the second place, I concluded as assuredly that, in the obscurer places of that testament (which are many), the best and most natural method of searching out the sense is, to inquire how, and in what sense, those phrases and manners of speech were understood, according to the vulgar and common dialect and opinion of that nation; and how they took them, by whom they were spoken, and by whom they were heard. For it is no matter what we can beat out concerning those manners of speech on the anvil of our own conceit, but what they signified among them, in their ordinary sense and speech.”*

In Hebraic thought the group is the most important and they value and think families and generations rather than individuals. When Achan sinned (Joshua 7), his whole family was stoned - guilt was corporate. For the Greek the individual is most important. They will therefore strike for better benefits without any regard to the impact on the company, to apply a contemporary example. Guilt is individual. They value church life according to what the individual gets out of it.

The Hebrew language consists of only 10 000 words. Greek has 200 000 words, and English 1 000 000. ‘Why’ is more

important to the Hebrew than ‘how’. The Greek view again, focuses on the ‘how’ (N’Tan Lawrence, 2010).

You, dear reader, would certainly have heard preachers stating the ‘biblical view’ that to God a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years are as a day. Then they would preach all kinds of messages – including calculations of the end times on the foundation of the six days of creation. So they would show where it all started and that 6 000 years have already passed! Therefore, we are in the last days! The basic error is already in their first point of departure, because in ancient Hebraic thought, 1000 designated more than could be counted and not the clinical Greek idea of a precise measurable number.

There is much academic debate on which language the original writings of the New Testament were created in. The majority seemingly favours the Greek language, while others insist it was done in Hebrew. Whichever one it may have been, however, it remains historical reality that, except for Luke, the authors were all Hebrews, and the background and literary roots of their writings had mostly been the Hebraic culture. (As a matter of interest, consider the detailed, chronological approach of Luke, as against the others. Bear in mind that Luke also wrote the book of Acts. In fact, some scholars regard the two books as one legal document for Paul’s defence in the court of Caesar).

We cannot escape the fact that Jesus of Nazareth rooted His teaching and methods firmly in the known culture of His time. It is, after all, through His people, the Hebrew nation, that God’s name (and therefore His very being) has been revealed throughout all the earth (Exod 9:16). If we consider the characteristics of the Hebrew language and mind, it should be clear that plain ‘Western-minded’ explanations are often in danger of error. Context, in all its cultural, historical, geographical and literary facets stands out as a sound point of departure, after which other principles may be considered (for example, the principles of first mention and single meaning).

Another factor that has left a destructive trail on Joe Church's understanding of the Bible (and I include myself), is the application of the techniques of Greek philosophy. Today I watch and listen to preachers and I shudder at the way in which they string verses together to present a "truth". Another technique is to use only part of a verse, let alone putting it into its original contextual reality. In this way a whole new context is created. Even worse, in this way new 'revelation' is created.

I cannot deal here with this topic in extensive detail, but I wish to underline the fact that, if we are searching to rightly divide the Word of Truth, we can no longer afford to turn a blind eye to the damage these techniques have done in the past and are still doing today.

Consider the example of Origen, one of the early so-called church fathers, who was a Gentile Christian from Alexandria. He is noted for writing Bible commentaries for other Christians in the Greek speaking world. Origen regarded the Hebrew text and Hebraic themes as raw data which was to be interpreted using the tools of Greek understanding. Steve Malz writes of him:

- *"A favourite theme of his was to re-interpret the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament, using techniques from Greek philosophy, married with insights from early Christian tradition and other writings. His driving principle was that the Bible contained three levels of meaning, corresponding to the body, soul and spirit. You can see the influence of Plato here, particularly when he adds that the 'body' level of meaning, the literal meaning of the text, is for the more simple minded whereas the 'soul' and more particularly the 'spirit' levels of meaning are for the more enlightened readers"* (Malz, 2009).

Augustine of Hippo followed later, and, building on the Bible interpretation techniques of Origen and others, he stated that readers were to look at the "spirit behind the literal texts", to grasp the mind of God through 'spiritual understandings'. The

average church member is therefore regarded as a ‘simple-minded’ person. (In bygone centuries the word ‘laity’ was also understood to mean ‘idiots’).

All the hype and fiction of modern end-times doctrines (and even the not so modern ones) can be traced back to the application of the techniques of Greek philosophy and culture. They promote reading into everything not only double and ongoing prophecies, but even multiple layers of prophecy. In other words, take one layer off and it exposes another, and so forth. This constitutes a complete denial of the biblical principle of clarity – a principle found throughout the Bible. God gave His Word through humans that His chosen people (initially) and later all peoples could understand it. See, for example: Mark 13:14 (in which the words “*let the reader understand*” are in brackets and might be the Gospel writer’s accentuation); 1 Corinthians 4:6; 1 John 2:21; and Revelation 1:3.

If we are serious about truth and knowledge in the Biblical context, we have to get back to basics. If we do not, we will continue to be deceived by what we regard as the light. And we will continue to fall for unbiblical doctrines simply because they are dressed up in biblical terminology. Martie and I have been there for far too long, and we have been robbed for most of our life of the fullness of the truth of kingdom living; and we suspect, so have most of our readers. We cannot blame our pastors and teachers and televangelists and authors of many books – we need to take the responsibility ourselves. That we have been able to enjoy so much of the presence of God in our lives is testimony to His Grace, for it has been not because of our great body of knowledge, but despite our lack of knowledge.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gerrie and Martie Malan were married in 1970. Shortly afterwards he entered a new career in the South African Correctional Services, where he served for 25 years. They were transferred many times and also had to relocate twice annually between Pretoria and Cape Town for eight years when Gerrie was a member of the Correctional Services' Parliamentary staff. Although Martie could take up employment for short periods in those years, she mostly found herself in the role of home maker, raising their three children – often under difficult circumstances.

Shortly after he was released on pension in 1995 following severe burnout, Gerrie became a lecturer in Correctional Management at the Technikon SA, which later merged with the University of South Africa. It was in this time that they left the Reformed church in which they were raised to go on a journey through the Pentecostal and Charismatic environments in search of biblical truth.

Martie, in the meantime, had taken on studies in biblical counselling, with Gerrie soon joining her. While she focussed on the area of emotional healing, Gerrie's focus was on spiritual warfare. He continued afterwards with studies in the ministry environment and eventually completed a doctoral thesis in Systematic Theology. For his thesis he studied Christ's 'born again' and Paul's 'in Christ' concepts. On the couple's journey they had wonderful experiences and met precious people, church leaders as well as ordinary church members. But as they studied the Scriptures, more and more questions arose about specific traditional church teachings.

A home group of five in April 2001 soon grew to a weekly meeting of some 50 people. The group quickly grew into a formal congregation (Hosea Christian Family Church), which later joined with another where Gerrie and Martie took up the leadership of the Bible College. Today they are not attached to any denomination as they focus on the search for biblical truth on many questions that developed during their journey through the Reformed, Pentecostal and Charismatic traditions. Unlike so many others who in similar processes have turned their back on the Bible, they feel that they have developed a much better understanding of the simple biblical truths when it is stripped of centuries of philosophising and pollution which robbed humanity of the kingdom life that was and is in God's heart for His people.

This book is part result of their search to distinguish the truth from fiction in the midst of a vast array of philosophised doctrines that characterise the 40 000 plus denominations found in the world.

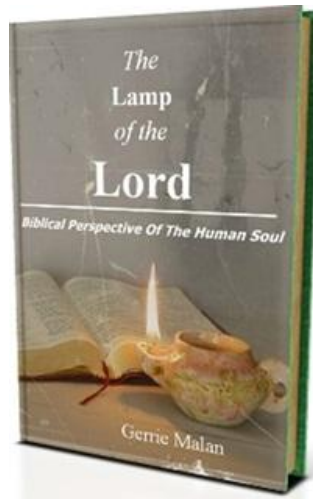
You may contact them through their website,

<http://www.hoseaconnection.org>

Visit their author's pages at

<https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/hoseacon>

MORE BOOKS BY GERRIE AND MARTIE MALAN



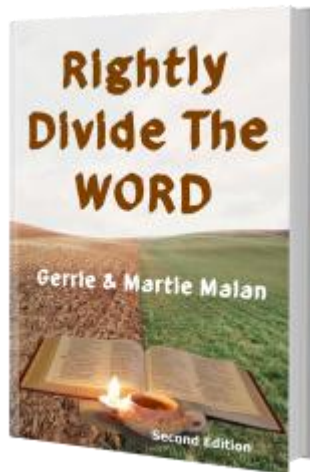
THE LAMP OF THE LORD

(Biblical View Of The Human Soul)

Gerrie Malan

The Bible does not give a clear and precise definition of the soul. The same is true of the expressions 'spirit' and 'spiritual'. Considering the influence of pagan philosophy and Greek philosophical techniques on Christian thought throughout the centuries, and adding the modern variety of approaches to interpretation, it is no wonder that confusion reigns in this regard. In their efforts to fill this void Christian teachers and writers have been presenting teaching filled with assumption and

confusion, albeit clothed in biblical terminology. This book is presented as an attempt to facilitate accurate understanding of the concepts that are used widely in popular seminars pertaining to matters such as spiritual deliverance and emotional healing.



RIGHTLY DIVIDE THE WORD

Gerrie & Martie Malan

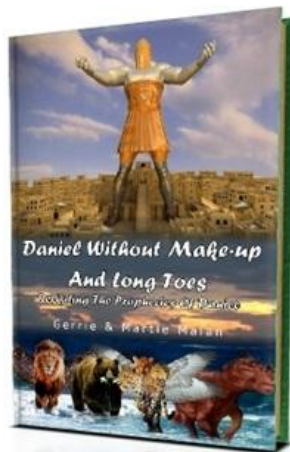
With this book the authors have focused on presenting a book for the average reader of the Bible, to facilitate a true and accurate understanding of the Scriptures. They discuss a number of basic, yet important principles to bear in mind when reading the Bible and point out the many distortions that pagan philosophical practices have led to, as well as errors flowing from subjectivity in translations of the Bible. A few important terms and expressions are discussed in the last chapter to illustrate why rightly dividing the word of truth is deemed so critical.



SNY DIE WOORD REGUIT

Gerrie & Martie Malan

This is the Afrikaans version of *Rightly Divide The Word*

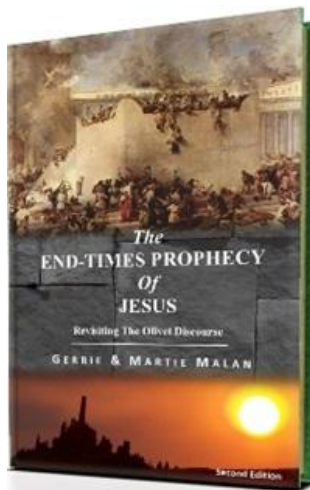


DANIEL WITHOUT MAKE-UP AND LONG TOES

(The Prophecies Of Daniel Revisited)

Gerrie & Martie Malan

End-times prophecies have been brought to the people's attention by the electronic media to an extent never thought possible a few decades ago. And most of these are rooted in some measure, in the biblical book of Daniel. Even if you should eventually decide that you do not agree with the authors' view, you will find the search for the simple truth in the book of Daniel stimulating. They tried throughout their study to strip the Daniel message of the pollution by all kinds of philosophy through the centuries (the make-up) and also specifically identified artificial insertions (the long toes of the so-called 'church age'). Throughout, they weighed the Daniel prophecies against recorded history. In the process important distortions in modern end-times doctrines are exposed.

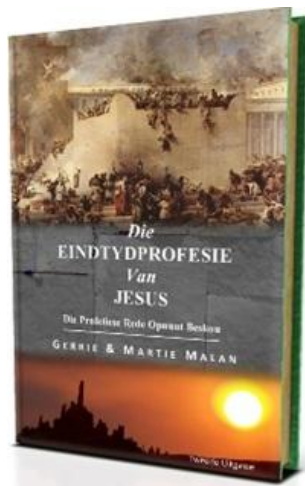


THE END-TIMES PROPHECY OF JESUS

(The Olivet Discourse Revisited)

Gerrie & Martie Malan

The electronic and other media have had a profound impact on the distribution of knowledge throughout the world. Knowledge of Bible teaching in various formats has been experiencing the same impact. One can specifically highlight the biblical end-times, in view of the numerous contemporary books and films or DVD's on such topics and man's natural interest in this regard through the centuries. Because Jesus of Nazareth is on record as God's ultimate prophet, it is inevitable that His end-times prophecy would assume an important place in all the sermons, teachings, books and multimedia that have been created on these topics. With this book the authors have revisited the end-times prophecy of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. They have focused on studying every section of the prophecy within the context that the original readers and audiences would have understood to be involved. At the same time their focus remained on presenting a relative concise book with the average reader as priority instead of a voluminous academic one. It is a book that is certain to stimulate a willingness to search for the biblical truth, especially in view of the many attempts to question the reliability of the Bible. The outcome might surprise many.



DIE EINDTYDPROFESIE VAN JESUS

(Die Profetiese Rede Opnuut Beskou)

Gerrie & Martie Malan

This is the Afrikaans version of *The End-times Prophecy Of Jesus*.

Authors' Website: **www.hoseaconnection.org**

You can also visit their author page at:
<https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/hoseacon>