

DOCTRINE OF ELECTION INDEX

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THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION (1)

QUESTION #1 – How does the doctrine of election relate to soteriology?
(Soteriology - Question #17)

Whenever one studies the doctrine of salvation, one will have to face the doctrine of election. There can be no doubt from the Word of God that a key doctrine connected to soteriology is the doctrine of election. The fact that God chooses some out of the many cannot be denied, nor can it be fully understood. The finite mind, trying to reconcile divine election with divine love, will always fall short. But as Dr. Chafer so adequately states: “Though the two revealed facts—divine election and the universality of divine love—cannot be reconciled within the sphere of human understanding, here, as elsewhere, God may be honored by believing and resting in Him” (Vol. 3, p. 165).

The fact that God makes certain choices among things cannot be denied:

- 1) It may be observed in the various classifications of angels.
- 2) It may be observed in the various classifications of stars.
- 3) It may be observed in the various classifications of race.
- 4) It may be observed in the various classifications of talents.
- 5) It may be observed in the various classifications of gifts.

It is clearly and obviously a reality that God does make elective choices.

The real difficulty comes when trying to wrestle with the concept of election as it relates to salvation. Before we can even begin to have a proper understanding (as proper as a finite mind can have) we must concede that the basis for our belief must not be our intellect, our emotions or our will. The basis for our belief must be the Bible, which is the revelation of God!

In any doctrinal study, the central focus must always be on God, not man. As Chafer writes, “Therefore, to God be all the glory! And to Him be given first consideration! Those systems of religious thought which require that the doctrine of God shall conform to the notion of the supremacy of man, which begin with man, defend man, and glorify man, are fundamentally wrong and therefore are productive of God-dishonoring error” (*Ibid.*, p.165).

In the end, God will be glorified by all things. His plan and His program will have been perfectly completed. All of His sheep from all of the ages will safely be in His fold. Not one will have been lost. God will never have been beaten, defeated or disappointed. Any true teaching will begin with God, focus on God, defend God and glorify God. True teaching will elevate God, not man in the doctrine of election.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION (2)

QUESTION #2 – Does the Bible teach that God chooses certain people unto Himself?
(Soteriology - Question #18)

It is an amazing fact that many individuals who love to postulate their theological and religious views never seem to get around to asking and answering this very basic, yet very critical question. If the Bible teaches election, then we must accept it. If the Bible does not teach election, we must reject it. It is just this simple. As we will certainly see, the doctrine of election did not originate from the mind of man for man is still trying to figure it out; but it did originate from the revelation of God.

Logically speaking, even without specific biblical references (which we shall most definitely see) the very fact that God is unlimited and the fact that His attributes are unlimited lend itself to the doctrine of election.

For example, it is clearly revealed that God is omniscient, that is, He is unlimited and infinite in knowledge. He knows all things past, present and future. He knows things possible and things actual. Many passages reveal this (Is. 42:8-9; 46:8-11; Ps. 139:1-6; 147:5). It is also revealed that God is omnipotent, that is, He is unlimited and infinite in power. God has the power to do whatever He wants to do. There is one like Him. This, too, is clearly revealed (Job 42:2; Jer. 32:17; Matt. 19:26; Rev. 4:11; 19:6).

Now obviously in just thinking about these two attributes, we are faced with the realization that God knows all who will be saved and God knows who will not be saved. His omniscience demands this. Furthermore, we are also faced with the realization that God has all power to do anything He wants. The obvious doctrinal question related to this study is since God knows who the lost are, why doesn't He just save them all? Why doesn't God use His power to turn every lost person's mind to the point that every human repents and believes on His Son? As we shall see, one biblical answer to these questions is that God does not choose some to be saved. Although we will never fully comprehend this point, it is one that is clearly taught in the Bible—God does elect certain people:

- 1) Deut. 7:6-7 - God's election chose the nation Israel (Deut. 10:15; Is. 65:9, 22).
- 2) I Sam. 16:10 - God's election chose Kings (Is. 45:1-4).
- 3) John 15:16 - God's election chose disciples.
- 4) Rom. 9:10-13 - God's election chooses individuals.
- 5) I Pet. 5:13 - God's election chooses churches (Col. 3:12; I Thess. 1:4).

As difficult as this may be to understand, or as hard as it may be to accept, no one who accepts the teachings of the Word of God can deny the doctrine of election. God does make selective choices.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION (3)

According to His infinite wisdom and purposes, according to His infinite knowledge and program, God does make selective, elective choices. This is a pure biblical fact.

When it comes to the matter of salvation, generally speaking, there have been three ways people have interpreted the doctrine of election:

1) Some see election as a corporate election.

Another name for this view of election is universalism. This interpretation basically believes God has elected everyone to be saved, and the unsaved just are not aware of it yet.

There is a strange evangelical twist to this perspective which believes that God does not elect individuals, but He does elect corporate things such as a nation or a church. Of course the obvious objection to this is that such corporate things like a nation or church is comprised of individuals.

2) Some see election as a foresight election.

This interpretation or view of election suggests that God elects on the basis of foreseen faith. In other words, God looks into the future and knows who will believe and He elects them to salvation.

On the outside, this view may appear logical, but it is filled with several weaknesses. For example, if God looks into the future and sees who will believe and be saved, then why doesn't He prevent the birth of those who won't believe so they won't wind up in hell? Furthermore, the Bible clearly states that none of us sought God (Rom. 3:10-12) and that our salvation, including our faith, was a gift from God (Eph. 2:8). The foresight election view tends to maximize man in the matter of salvation and tends to minimize God.

3) Some see election as a pre-temporal election.

This view basically suggests that God, according to His eternal plan and His good pleasure, selected some to salvation before time began and before the foundation of the world. This view states that those God has elected are fully, finally and eternally His elect.

As we shall see, this view of election does seem to fit best with the entire teaching and theology found in the Bible. This view also seems to best let the Bible speak for itself.

QUESTION #3 – What are the key words that establish the fact that the doctrine of election is a biblical doctrine connected to salvation?

(Soteriology - Question #19)

Dr. Charles Ryrie says, "Often the chief problem in understanding this doctrine is not including enough facets of it. No human mind will ever harmonize sovereignty and free will, but ignoring or downplaying one or the other in the interests of a supposed harmony will solve nothing"

(Basic Theology, p. 311).

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION (4)

The truth of the matter, when it comes to election, any attempt to downplay it or ignore it actually winds up demeaning God. God has put into writing certain concepts communicated by certain words which directly or indirectly establish the doctrine of election:

1) Election - This word “eklectos” (εκλεκτος) means to make a choice of selection.

This particular word is used in regard to Israel (Matt. 24:22, 24; Mark 13:20, 22, 27); to the Christian (Rom. 8:33; I Pet. 1:1); to Paul (Titus 1:1) and in regard to Christ (I Pet. 2:6).

2) Chosen - This word “eklego” (εκλεγω) means to pick out or choose.

This particular word is used in reference to the disciples (Luke 6:13; John 6:70; 13:18; 15:6, 19; Acts 1:2). It is also used in reference to Israel (Mark 13:20). It is also used in reference to individuals (Acts 1:24; 13:17; 15:7; Eph. 1:4).

3) Drawing - This word “elko” (ελκο) means to draw, to lead, to impel.

As it relates to human beings in its biblical usage, this word seems to imply a forced leading which would not be consistent with the desired will of the individual (Acts 16:19; 21:30; James 2:6).

This particular word is clearly used in connection with salvation (John 6:44). John 12:32 indicates that this drawing will include all types of people, both Jews and Gentiles (John 10:16; 11:51-52).

4) Calling - This word “kaleo” (καλεω) means to call or summons.

It is a word that is clearly used in the context of God calling a person to salvation (Rom. 8:30; 9:24-25; I Cor. 1:9; 7:17-18; Gal. 1:6; I Thess. 2:12; 5:24; I Pet. 1:15; II Pet. 1:3).

5) Purpose - This word “protithami” (προτιθημι) means to set up a purpose or plan or to establish a purpose or plan beforehand.

This word particularly speaks of the plan of God (Rom. 3:25), which seems to not be in harmony with the plan of man (Rom. 1:13). This word is clearly connected to personal salvation (Eph. 1:9).

6) Foreknowledge - This word “proginosko” (προγνωσκω) means to know beforehand.

When this word is used in the Bible, it seems to suggest a knowledge that is absolutely certain of what will happen (II Pet. 3:17). It speaks of a very intimate knowledge (Acts 26:5) which includes the idea of both knowing and ordaining (i.e. I Pet. 1:20).

This word is clearly used in connection with God saving an individual (Rom. 8:29; I Pet. 1:2).