

# FOREKNOWLEDGE, FOREORDINATION, AND THE LIKE

1. First, what is meant by the foreknowledge of God?

ANSWER: By the foreknowledge of God we mean His knowledge from eternity of all the events and developments in His moral universe (see Eph. 1:4; Matt. 25:34; 2 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8; 17:8; Acts 2:22; 2 Tim. 2:19; Eph. 3:10-11).

2. Second, what did God foreknow with reference to His moral creatures?

ANSWER: He foreknew that they would lapse into sin and would, consequently, stand in need of salvation (2 Pet. 1:1-2, 20; Acts 2:23). We cannot conceive of omniscience without foreknowledge of such important matters as these. Neither can we conceive of God as being required to make experiments.

3. Third, what is the connection between God's foreknowledge and His eternal purpose and plan?

ANSWER: His eternal purpose and plan were formed with the likelihood in prospect that man would lapse into sin and stand in need of salvation (see Rom. 3:23-26; etc.). The plan of salvation was, therefore, no afterthought, introduced merely upon the event of human sinfulness. Instead, the sinfulness of the race was distinctly foreseen, and the atonement decided upon, and all the particular circumstances and conditions of the race devised from the very outset. Alexander Campbell said:

Evident then it is, that the whole remedial or gospel system was purposed, arranged and established upon the basis of the revealed distinctions of Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and by these, in reference to one another, before the foundation of the world; and that all the institutions and developments of religion in the different ages of the world were, in pursuance of that system, devised in eternity, and consummated some two thousand years ago (Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System*, p. 18).

4. Fourth, what is meant by foreordination?

ANSWER: Foreordination is the term used to describe all those exercises of the Divine will by which the circumstances and events in the unfolding of God's eternal purpose and plan, were determined and decreed from eternity.

5. Fifth, what is the Scripture doctrine of foreordination?

ANSWER: It is that the Divine plan of redemption for man was foreordained in all its particulars, and in light of God's foreknowledge that the race would lapse into sin and stand in need of salvation. This does not mean that certain individuals are foreordained to be saved, and that others are foreordained to be lost. This monstrous claim is derogatory to God. It means, rather, that a certain class (or, group) of persons is foreordained to be saved, and that another and opposite class (or, group) is foreordained to be lost.

Commenting on Rom. 8:28-30, Moses Lard said:

All things workd together for good to those that are called according to God's ancient purpose; and they are thus called by the gospel. Those who He foresaw in purpose would obey Him, he predetermined to be, when raised from the dead, of like form with that of His Son. Those whom He thus in purpose predetermined, He justified in purpose; and those whom He justified in purpose, He glorified in purpose (Moses E. Lard, *Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Romans*, p. 279).

It is clear, therefore, that the apostle is contemplating in Rom. 8:28-30, God's eternal purpose. The class (or, group) for whom God purposes to work the benefits described (justification, glorification, etc.) is the class of "them that love God," who, of course, manifest their love for Him by obedience to His will (1 John 5:3; John 14:15, 21, 23-24; etc.) Briefly put, the elect, or those foreordained to be saved with an everlasting salvation, are those who respond to the overtures and calls of God as extended through the gospel, and who manifest their faith and love by submission to His will.

6. Sixth, what class (or, group) of persons is foreordained to be saved?

ANSWER: The class consisting of all those who accept God's offer of salvation through Christ (Eph. 1:3-5, 13-14; 2:8; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; etc.). God's overtures and calls are extended to us through the gospel. All who hear and accept God's call extended to us through the gospel, are those who constitute the class of accountable human beings who are foreordained to be saved (provided, of course, that they remain loyal to Him--1 Cor. 15:58; 1 John 1:7; etc.). So, they are known in Scripture as "the elect" (Rev. 22:17; 1 Pet. 1:1-2; Matt. 25:34; etc.). Campbell stated:

The present elect of God are, then, those who are in Christ, and not those out of Him: for it was in Him that God has set His affection upon them, and chose them to eternal life before the world began. God is not, indeed, in this whole affair a respecter of persons. It is at character, and not person, that God looks. He has predestinated all that are in Christ "to be holy and without blame before Him in love," and, at His coming, to be conformed to Him in all personal excellency and beauty and to share with Him the bliss of a glorious immortality. So that "we shall be like Him"--the firstborn, and we His junior brethren, bearing His image in our persons as exactly as we now bear the image of the earthly Adam, the father of us all (Ibid., pp. 34-35).

7. Seventh, what class (or, group) of persons is foreordained to be lost?

ANSWER: The class consisting of all those who reject or neglect God's offer of salvation through Christ (John 3:18; Mark 16:16; Rom. 2:8-11; Heb. 2:3; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; etc.).

8. Eighth, why is this class (or, group) of persons foreordained to be lost?

ANSWER: They will be lost, not because of anything God has done or will do to cause them to be lost, but in consequence of their own disobedience, indifference, and rebellion (see James 1:13-15; John 5:40; 2 Pet. 2:9; Rom. 2:15-16; Matt. 7:18-20; Heb. 10:29-31; etc.).

Paul Copan, facing the very issues we have been discussing, said:

I want to sketch, therefore, a biblical response to the charge of divine arbitrariness regarding those who are saved and those who are not. I will do so by arguing for a corporate rather than an individual understanding of God's election to salvation (Paul Copan, *That's Just Your Interpretation: Responding to Skeptics Who Challenge Your Faith*, p. 85).

God knows all that is capable of being known, and He knows it perfectly! To Job, it was revealed that God is "perfect in knowledge" (Job 36:4; 37:16). And, the Psalmist simply says, "His understanding is infinite" (Ps. 147:5)!