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**B0548 – December 11, 2005 – Major Bible Themes**  
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**Proverbs 16:9** The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.

Election is one of the most difficult doctrines in the Bible. If you ask most Christians about election they will say they don’t believe it. But the Bible certainly teaches it. If we are to believe God then we have to believe in election. Of course the debate about election revolves around the sovereignty of God and human responsibility. Granted, there are many difficulties with reconciling the sovereignty of God with human responsibility. And there has never been a human or angel who has solved all the difficulties. Nevertheless, the Bible teaches divine sovereignty as well as human responsibility and we should never shrink

back from declaring one while excluding the other. That there is no contradiction is clear from the following.

- The inspired writers are not conscious of a contradiction
- The difference between an infinite and finite being must always be kept in mind

To understand this we have to realize that all events, including men's actions, are decreed by God. The decree of God is simply the entire plan of God including all events which will ever occur.

## I. GOD'S PLAN/DECREE

### A. Proceeds From His Omniscience

The source of God's plan is His omniscience. God knows all things *actual* and *possible*. The things *actual* includes complete knowledge of His own being and every detail of this history from beginning to end. The things *possible* include an infinite number of alternative histories as well as the what-if's of actual history (Matt 11:21-24). Because God is eternal His knowledge is eternal. He does not have to think through an actual or possible chain of events. He knows them all simultaneously and eternally. In fact there are two people who don't think; moron because he won't think and God because He has always known everything.

### B. Is All-Inclusive

**Isaiah 46:9-11** "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me, <sup>10</sup> Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; <sup>11</sup> Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned *it*, *surely* I will do it.

God is God and He planned history declaring the end from the beginning. God's purpose is going to be established and He will accomplish all His good pleasure. Paul reminds us of this in

**Ephesians 1:9-12** He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him...having been predestined according to

His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will...to the praise of His glory.

His plan involves things that seem as trivial as a bird of prey and as vital as human movements. Nothing happens outside of God's plan, nothing can thwart His plan and everything that happens is a part of God's plan. Upon recognizing this Nebuchadnezzar's reason returned to him

**Daniel 4:35** "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'

God is God and He has an all-inclusive plan that includes everything.

### 1. Physical Acts

God's plan includes all physical acts in creation and as such God decrees these acts to take place in conformity with the nature of the physical creation. That is, the normal mode of operation, which God has decreed, is cause-effect although their charge seems to often rest with personal beings such as angels.

**Colossians 1:17** He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

### 2. Human Acts

A part of God's decree is the self-determined acts of personal beings; angels and humans. Thus, the actions of angels and humans are free even though for God they are certain. They could not be otherwise and they will certainly take place, albeit freely. God decreed the acts of personal beings to be self-determined in such a way that does not remove human responsibility. From God's perspective every act is certain although from man's perspective they are uncertain.

**Acts 2:22-23** "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know-- <sup>23</sup> this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.

**Acts 4:27-28** "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, <sup>28</sup> to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.

Peter did not consider this contradictory. Nor did he find it difficult since he spoke often of election and foreknowledge (1 Pt 1:1; 2:9; 5:13) and said that what Paul taught was hard to understand (2 Peter 3:16). "The question of how God does this cannot be answered by man because the mode of divine agency is a mystery to him. The notion of a decree is not contradictory to that of free agency, unless decree is defined as compulsion and it be assumed that God executes all his decrees by physical means and methods. No one can demonstrate that it is beyond the power of God to make a voluntary act of man an absolutely certain event."<sup>i</sup> God never works in a mechanical process kind of way with man. He rather works in ways that fully accord with the moral and intelligent constitution of personal beings.

### **C. Is Based on His Will**

God's plan is based on the good pleasure of His will and not on the foreseen acts of men. God foresaw all the acts of men because He knows all things simultaneously. But the real issue is whether God's plan is based on the foreseen acts of men or upon His own will. Scripture indicates that His plan is based on His own will and not on foreseen acts.

**Ephesians 1:9-12** He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him...having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will...to the praise of His glory.

### **D. Is For His Glory**

God's purpose is not human happiness but His own glory. Thus Paul says He "works all things after the counsel of His will...to the praise of His glory". The plan God chose from all eternity is the plan that best meets this crowning goal and it does so by manifesting His divine attributes to the greatest degree. If history were designed for human happiness then there would have been no Fall and resulting consequences. But such a plan would not reveal His mercy, holiness, or justice. God chose the best plan in accordance with His own wise counsel that proceeds from His will and manifests His attributes to the utmost and thereby brings Him glory.

## II. THE WILL(S) OF GOD

One thing that often confuses people is the phrase “the will of God”. The Greek words for “will” are *thelema* and *thelo* which mean “to wish, to will, to desire”. God’s will can be classified in three categories; ultimate will, efficacious will, and permissive will.

### A. Ultimate Will of God

The *ultimate will* of God includes all things that God brings to pass *directly* (i.e. immediately by an act of His own power independent of any other free agents). All such things certainly take place because God in His sovereign power causes them to take place. God’s *direct* dealings include the following: origination of the plan of God, predestination, election, creation, regeneration, dispensing of spiritual gifts, etc...

### B. Efficacious Will of God

The *efficacious will* of God includes all things that God brings to pass *indirectly* (i.e. mediately). These things are just as certain as things that God does *directly* but they come to pass *indirectly* through responsible agents because God provides the necessary means to produce the desired effect. The efficacious will of God involves such things as; inspiration of Scripture, preaching the word, use of spiritual gifts, prayer, et. al. In all such cases the results are certain but they are effected through the agency of angels or men.

### C. Permissive Will of God

The *permissive will* of God includes all things that God allows to come to pass, even though they are contrary to His moral will or desire. For example, God

**1 Timothy 2:4** desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

But just because God desires all men to be saved does not mean all men will be saved. God also wishes men would follow His commandments but we don’t always obey them (1 John 3:23-24). God never “forces” us to follow His commands. Every time we reject one of His commands, although He knew we would reject it, we are out of the will of God. Have God’s purposes been thwarted? By no means. God has the right to desire or wish something without it being in conformity with what He has planned will happen. What God desires to

happen is not always what He has determined to happen. The permissive will of God includes; the Fall of Satan, the Fall of Adam and Eve, quenching the Spirit, and all sin. Even though God has included such things in His decree He is not responsible for them because He decreed that they would take place by free agents acting voluntarily and not under compulsion.

#### **D. Secret Will of God**

Lastly, the *secret will* of God includes all things that God has not revealed to us

**Deuteronomy 29:29** “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

Some things are included in God’s will and plan but have not been revealed to us. These things are either beyond human comprehension or await future revelation in the New Heavens and New Earth.

### **III. WORDS ASSOCIATED WITH ELECTION**

#### **A. Foreknowledge**

The words "foreknowledge", "foreknown", and "foreknew" come from two Greek words *proginosko* and *prognosis*. Together these words are used only seven times in the NT (Acts 2:23; 26:5; Rom 8:29; 11:2; 1 Pt 1:2, 20; 2 Pt 3:17). Foreknowledge is associated with election only two times (Rom 11:2, 5; 1 Pt 1:1-2) and with predestination only once (Rom 8:29).

The debate is over the meaning of foreknowledge. Does “foreknowledge” mean “to know beforehand” or does it carry the pregnant meaning “to choose”. It is very difficult, if not impossible to make this word mean the same as the word “election”. It seems to me the best meaning in personal contexts is “intimate knowledge beforehand”. In impersonal contexts the best meaning is “knowledge beforehand”. Foreknowledge is therefore a subcategory of omniscience. Only some events and some people are properly the subject of foreknowledge. For example, unbelievers are not foreknown by God.

#### **B. Predestination**

The second word associated with election is predestination. Predestination is the Greek word *proorizo* which means “to mark off beforehand, to pre-appoint, to pre-plan” and is used seven times in the NT (Acts 2:23; 4:28; Rom. 8:29f; 1 Co. 2:7; Eph. 1:5, 11). Christ’s betrayal, arrest, trial, and crucifixion were “predestined” (acts 4:28). “those He foreknew He predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ” (Rom 8:29). We are “predestined to adoption as sons...according to the kind intention of His will...according to His purpose” (Eph 1:5, 11). The best sense of this word is that it does not have to do with persons so much as it has to do with their destiny. God pre-planned or appointed a destiny for Christ, namely, his betrayal, arrest, trial and crucifixion. Likewise, with those person’s He foreknew he pre-planned a destiny, namely, to be adopted into God’s family and be conformed to the image of Christ.

The relationship between foreknowledge and predestination is that logically God’s foreknowledge of certain person’s precedes His pre-planning their destiny. Election unto salvation has to do with God’s before time choice of individuals to be holy and blameless in His presence.

#### **IV. GOD’S ELECTION(S)**

I’ve done a lot of study of election this time.<sup>ii</sup> The basic views are that election is unconditional or conditional upon faith and whether election is individual or corporate. Three Greek words *eklegomai*, *eklektos*, *ekloge* mean “to select, to choose” and sometimes “choice, excellent, beautiful, pure”. Several Hebrew words such as *bahir*, *bahur*, *rosh*, *laqish*, *et. al.* correspond. There are many elections in the Bible. When God is the subject:

1. God chose Abram (Neh 9:7)
2. God chose Jacob (Ps 135:4; Rom 9:11)
3. God chose the father’s of Israel (Acts 13:17)
4. God chose Israel (Dt 14:2; Rom 11:28)
5. God chose the remnant of Israel (Rom 11:5; 1 Pt 1:1)
6. God chose Jerusalem to be His city (1 Ki 11:13)
7. God chose tribe of Levi for priestly service (Dt 18:5ff)
8. God chose tribe of Judah to be Messianic line (Ps 78:67ff)
9. God chose David from tribe of Judah to be king of Israel (1 Sam 16:8ff)
10. God chose Christ to be His servant (Isa 43:10)
11. Christ chose the “twelve” apostles (Luke 6:13)
12. Christ chose the “eleven” out of the world (John 15:19)
13. God chose Paul (Acts 9:15)
14. God chose Peter (Acts 15:7)
15. God chose us in Him (Eph 1:4)

The question we have to ask of each of these is “To what did God elect the object?” Did God elect them to service? salvation? This is an important question. The second important question is “Did God elect individually or corporately?” The third question is “Is this election conditional or unconditional?”

First, it seems to me that corporate election presupposes individual election. Individual’s make up the whole. The nation of Israel began with one man Abram who was elect of God. Next, Isaac was elect of God. Third, Jacob was elect of God. Eventually the descendants of Jacob became a nation in the wilderness. This nation is elect and yet within the nation certain tribes and individuals were elect for various services. It should be noted that the election of Abram mentioned in the Bible was not to salvation. Nor was the election of David or Aaron. These were elected to “service”. Christ was also chosen to be a servant (Isa 43:10). The nation’s election was not to salvation either for there were many who did not enjoy salvation! However, it should be noted that the Bible does speak of God’s election of the remnant which *is* unto salvation (Rom 11:5) and that this proceeds from God’s foreknowledge (Rom 11:2, 5). In other words, those God knew intimately beforehand were elect unto salvation. It should go without saying that when God is the subject and man is the object it is God who does the selecting and not man. And in all contexts where God chooses He chose from a number of options. We must assume that God always makes the wisest choice and according to His knowledge (not arbitrary). Christ chose the twelve apostles out from a large number of disciples (Luke 6:39) and yet, of course, this was not to salvation because Judas was one of the twelve. Yet Jesus said to the eleven apostles that He had chosen them out of the world (John 15:19)! This is more than apostleship. Being called out of the world is being called unto salvation. John wrote his 2nd letter to an “elect” or “choice” lady and this can hardly be a local church as many suggest. Her “elect” or “choice” sister sent her greetings and neither “lady” nor “sister” are ever used elsewhere to designate the church. Theologically significant texts include

**1 Peter 1:1-2** Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen <sup>2</sup> according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,

Here the election of the sojourners of the dispersion is based on the foreknowledge of God. God knew them intimately beforehand and in accordance with that knowledge He chose them. The foreknowledge and election are coextensive.



**Ephesians 1:4** He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love.

God chose us is a middle voice. This means with intense personal interest and for His purpose. God chose us “in Him” contextually is linked to the “In Him” of verse 7. This is a dative of connection. Thus, God chose us for Himself in connection with Christ’s work of redemption. When? “before the foundation of the world”. This is a before time and not in time choice. For what purpose? “that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love.” Thus, God, with intense personal interest that arose out of His foreknowledge of us, chose us for Himself in connection with Christ’s redeeming work, before the foundation of the world, for the purpose that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love. God sought to secure a portion of the human race in His presence. This He was not obligated to do for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, but due to His great mercy and love with which He loved us He decreed to set some apart before time to be in His presence in eternity future.

**evkle,gomai**

### **BDAG**

**1 to pick out someone or something, *choose (for oneself)***

**2 to make a choice in accordance with significant preference, *select someone or something for oneself***

**3 gather in a crop, *gather***

### **NT**

**Mk. 13:20 (2 God chose for Himself the elect nation of Israel?) Lk. 6:13 (1 or 2 Christ chose twelve out of His disciples to be apostles); 9:35 (Majority Text reads "Beloved One"); 10:42 (2); 14:7 (2); Jn. 6:70 (1 or 2 Christ chose the twelve and yet Judas is a devil); 13:18 (this seems to exclude Judas as chosen. Judas was chosen for apostleship but not chosen for something else); 15:16 (for apostleship out of the disciples), 19 (out of the world and because of this the world hates the elect); Acts 1:2 (Christ chose twelve out of His disciples to be apostles), 24 (choosing of 12th apostle); 6:5 (chose seven deacons); 13:17 (the fathers of Israel were chosen by God); 15:7 (God chose Peter to declare gospel to Gentiles), 22 (the choosing of missionaries), 25 (the choosing of missionaries); 1 Co. 1:27f; Eph. 1:4 (God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world); Jas. 2:5**

### **LXX**

Gen. 6:2; 13:11; Num. 16:5, 7; 17:20; Deut. 1:33; **4:37; 7:7; 10:15** (election grows out of God's love); 12:5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26; **14:2** (corporate), 23ff; 15:20; 16:2, 6f, 11, 15f; 17:8, 10, **15** (chosen for service (king of Israel)); **18:5f** (Levites chosen for priestly service); 26:2; 30:19; 31:11; Jos. 9:27; 24:22; Jda. 10:14; Jdg. 5:8; 10:14; **1 Sam. 2:28** (Levites chosen for priestly service) 8:18; 10:24 (God chosen for service (Saul as king of Israel) 12:13; **13:2** (chosen for service (military)) **16:8ff** (chosen for service (David as king of Israel) 17:8, 40; **2 Sam. 6:21** (chosen for service (David)) 16:18; 19:39; 24:12ff; 1 Ki. 3:8; 8:16, 44, 48; **11:13** (chosen city (Jerusalem)) 32, 34, 36; 14:21; 18:23, 25; 2 Ki. 21:7; 23:27; 1 Chr. 15:2; 16:41; **19:10** (selected from all the choice men for service (military)); 21:10f; **28:4f** (David chosen from among chosen tribe of Judah; God took pleasure in David to make him king over Israel); 2 Chr. 6:5f, 34, 38; 7:12, 16; 12:13; 33:7; 35:19; 1 Es. 5:1; Neh. 1:9; 9:7 (God chose Abram); Tob. 1:4; Tbs. 1:4; 1 Ma. 6:35; 7:37; 9:25; 10:32; 2 Ma. 5:19; 3 Ma. 2:9; Ps. 32:12 (corporate) 46:5; 64:5; 77:67f (God chose tribe of Judah and David His servant), 70; 83:11; 104:26 (God chose Aaron); 131:13; 134:4 (God chose Jacob for Himself, Israel for His possession); Prov. 24:32; Job 29:25; 34:33; Sir. 45:4, 16; Joel 2:16; Zech. 3:2; Isa. 7:15f; 14:1; 40:20; 41:8f, 24; 43:10 (God chose Christ to be His servant); 44:1f, 12; 49:7; 56:4; 58:5f; 65:12; 66:3f; Bar. 3:27; Ezek. 20:38; Dan. 11:35; Dat. 11:35; 12:10.

**evklogh,**

### BDAG

**1** a special choice, *selection, choice, election*

**2** *that which is chosen/selected*

### NT

Acts 9:15 (Paul chosen for service); Rom. 9:11 (Jacob chosen in accordance with God's purpose); 11:5 (the present remnant is according to God's gracious choice), 7 (those who were chosen obtained righteousness by faith), 28 (according to God's choice Israel is beloved for the sake of the fathers); 1 Thess. 1:4 (God chose the Thessalonians for salvation); 2 Pet. 1:10 (God chose the sojourners of the dispersion)

### LXX

Ps. Sol. 9:4; 18:5

**evklekto,j**

### BDAG

**1 pertaining to being selected, *chosen***

**2 pertaining to being especially distinguished, *elect***

**3 pertaining to being considered best in the course of a selection, *choice, excellent***

## NT

Matt. 22:14 (**many are called but few are choice**); 24:22 (**chosen to enter the kingdom in physical bodies**), 24, 31; Mk. 13:20, 22, 27; Lk. 18:7 (**God will bring about justice to His choice ones**); 23:35 (**Christ the choice One**); Rom. 8:33 (**who will bring a charge against God's choice**); 16:13 (**a choice man in the Lord**); Col. 3:12 (**chosen/choice of God**); 1 Tim. 5:21 (**chosen/choice angels**); 2 Tim. 2:10 (**Paul suffered for the sake of the chosen so they would receive final salvation**); Tit. 1:1 (**Paul's was an apostle for the faith of God's elect**; 1 Pet. 1:1 (**elect sojourners of the dispersion...according to the foreknowledge of God in verse 2**); 2:4 (**Christ the choice stone**), 6 (**Christ the choice stone**), 9 (**probably choice race**); 2 Jn. 1:1 (**choice lady**), 13 (**choice sister**); Rev. 17:14 (**the called and chosen and faithful**)

## LXX

Gen. 23:6 (**choicest**); 41:2, 4f, 7, 18, 20; Exod. 14:7; 30:23 (**finest**); Num. 11:28; Deut. 12:11; Jda. 20:15, 34; Jdg. 20:15 (**choice men (military)**), 34; 1 Sam. 24:3; 26:2; 2 Sam. 8:8; 21:6; 22:27 (**pure**); 1 Ki. 2:46; 5:3; 2 Ki. 8:12 (**young men**); 19:23; 1 Chr. 7:40 (**choice men**); 9:22; 16:13 (**chosen ones**); 18:8; Ezr. 5:8; Neh. 5:18 (**choice sheep**); Est. 8:12; Jdt. 2:15; Tob. 8:15; Tbs. 13:13; 1 Ma. 4:1; 9:5; 15:26; 2 Ma. 1:25; Ps. 17:27; 77:31 (**choice men**); 88:4, 20; 104:6, 43; 105:5, 23; 140:4; Prov. 8:19 (**choicest silver**); 12:24; 17:3; Cant. 5:15; 6:9f; Job 37:11; Wis. 3:9, 14; 4:15; Sir. 24:15; 46:1; 47:22; 49:6; Amos 5:11; Hab. 1:16; Hag. 2:7; Zech. 7:14; 11:16; Isa. 22:7f (**choicest valleys**); 28:16; 40:30; 42:1 (**My chosen one in whom My soul delights**); 43:20; 45:4; 49:2 (**He has made Me a select arrow**); 54:12; 65:9, 15, 23; Jer. 3:19; 10:17; 22:7 (**choicest cedars**); 26:15; 31:15; 32:34; 38:39; Bar. 3:30; Lam. 1:15; 5:13f; Ezek. 7:20; 19:12, 14; 25:9; 27:20, 24; 31:16; Dat. 11:15.

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<sup>i</sup> W.G.T.Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 317.

<sup>ii</sup> C. Gordon Olson, W.G.T. Shedd, H.C. Thiessen, V.D. Doerksen, L.S. Chafer.

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