

Part 5: The Church is Not the Elect of God

Whether church worship in the West or temple worship in the East, institutional religion, fundamentally, is selling salvation. Supposedly, God thought it a good idea to give mere men salvific authority on earth and didn't see the possibility of exploitation coming. Though the Bible states explicitly that only Christ has the authority to forgive sin, the idea that God granted this power to religious authorities on earth is always the primary selling point. Like all institutions, church is selling something; in this case, salvation. We have heard the truism, "sex sells," but nothing sells like salvation. Regardless of the economy in any given geography at any given time, the splendid unfractured of the church remains and even expands, and rulers capitulate to church leaders lest they are condemned to hell. And, the redefinition of the new birth is vital for the church because Spirit indwelled, empowered, once-saved-always-saved, free, individuals make for an anemic supply and demand. And again, forgiveness of sin only comes by the new birth; the new birth is the church's greatest competitor.

How Protestantism exploits the gospel for power and financial gain is interesting. Formal church membership is a sanctuary city of sorts from the gospel. In reality, the gospel is bad news and church membership is the good news.

The Protestant marketing strategy, like all major religions including paganism, begins with predestination. This is a vital component of the **metanarrative** that we will be looking at in part 9. Unbeknownst to most Protestants, its doctrine of predestination has three classes, or categories of those preselected by God for salvation or eternal damnation. These are the "non-elect," "the called," and those who "persevere."¹ According to John Calvin, the father of Presbyterianism and counted as one of the foremost fathers of Protestantism,

In fine, we are sufficiently taught by experience itself, that calling and faith are of little value without perseverance, which, however, is not the gift of all.²

The expression of our Savior, "Many are called, but few are chosen," (Mt. 22:14), is also very improperly interpreted (see Book 3, chap. 2, sec. 11, 12). There will be no ambiguity in it, if we attend to what our former remarks ought to have made clear—viz. that there are two species of calling: for there is an universal call, by which God, through the external preaching of the word, invites all men alike, even those for whom he designs the call to be a savor of death, and the ground of a severer condemnation. Besides this there is a special call which, for the most part, God bestows on believers only, when by the internal illumination of the Spirit he causes the word preached to take deep root in their hearts. Sometimes, however, he communicates it also to those whom he enlightens only for a time, and whom

¹<https://paulspassingthoughts.com/2014/01/30/predestination-and-the-gnostic-connection/>

²The John Calvin Institutes of the Christian Religion 3.24.6

afterwards, in just punishment for their ingratitude, he abandons and smites with greater blindness.³

In other words, regarding the subject of assurance (of salvation), it is impossible for any Protestant to know whether they are of the perseverance category until the final judgment. This is the case for Catholics as well except their marketing plan is a little different. IF you are a Catholic, and you do not participate in the sacraments (means of grace) sufficiently enough, or in other words, you don't "do church" enough, you burn off the remaining sin in purgatory. Catholics who remain alive can pay fees to the church to shorten purgatory for loved ones. Yes, people actually buy into these kinds of beliefs...no pun intended. At one time the Catholic Church even sold pre-forgiveness for sin called "indulgences."

“The Catholic church under Pope John the 22nd, (1244-1334) established [the] practice of selling indulgences. Pope Leo X (1475-1521) published the list of indulgences: Robbing a church \$2.25; Burning a house \$2.75; Killing a layman \$1.75; Forgery and lying \$2.00; Eating meat in Lent \$2.75; Ravishing a virgin \$2.00; Striking a priest \$2.75; Robbery \$3.00; Priest keeping a mistress \$2.25; Murder of parents or wife \$2.50; Absolution of all crimes \$12.00.”⁴

Before we move back to the Protestant salvific marketing plan, it should be noted why people buy into these ridiculous notions that defy God-given commonsense. The answer is AUTHORITY supposedly granted by God. When authority is truth, people accept whatever the authorities state as truth. The same can be said of expertism and elitism. And the foundation, regardless of the ideology or religion, is always predeterminism. Whether referred to as "fate," "destiny," "determinism," "predestination," or "election," cultural pecking orders are predetermined by supreme power through lineage, trade, politics, or education. The result is a world saturated with caste mentality and caste systems executed by traditions or laws. Caste dominates every corner of existence and defines human history. This world is a kingdom where caste rules.

In contrast, the kingdom we are baptized into is a body. The following excerpt explains the difference:

Here is my thumb. Last week, I accidentally drilled a hole in it. As a member of my body, I have NO authority over my thumb. I cannot command my thumb to heal. As with most bodily functions, they are what we call, "involuntary." Different cells that make up different body members and organs are a body within a body and literally have a complex mind of their own. My head, viz, my mind, has NO authority over my body.

HOWEVER, I can edify my body and submit to its needs in order for all the cells to better perform their function. Get it? That's the illustration here. It's body, not authority. You can't tell your body to do squat. You can desire your body to do

³The John Calvin Institutes of the Christian Religion 3.24.8

⁴<https://paulspassingthoughts.com/2013/01/16/calvinists-an-evil-augustinian-legacy-and-proud-of-it/>

something, but if that particular member is unhealthy, no amount of bossing is going to make it do what it doesn't want to do or can't do.

You must submit to the needs of your body in order to have a healthy overall function. That's knowledge of your body, and edification of your body members. That's good choices and knowledge that edifies. This is what the Bible is talking about when men are instructed to live with their wives according to knowledge.⁵

ALL world religions are predicated on God's supposed appointment of human mediators. And, human mediators between God and man are a huge problem, especially when their truth is authority. In fact, an idea trending in church culture follows: "No pastor is perfect; they are going to be wrong from time to time. In many instances, God allows them to be wrong to test our humility. The meek will inherit the earth, and if we are truly humble, we will "put ourselves under the authority of godly men." Hence, for all practical purposes, the new trend in the church is the **gospel of authority**. Regardless of anything, we must not, "touch God's anointed." This has led to unfettered evil in the church not even spoken of among the unregenerate. Even discernment bloggers who reject this notion believe such authority is vested in the church, therefore, church isn't the problem, "high controlling" leaders are the problem as if the church wasn't founded by men who had the exact same ideology. Where do they think the ideology came from?

But we must not miss the fundamental point on this wise, determinism is the source of human authority over salvation supposedly granted by God. It is the exact same ruse propagated by the serpent in the garden. Obviously, the serpent presented itself as a more knowledgeable mediator between Eve and God. In addition, the offer was made to Eve specifically and didn't include Adam. This would have made Eve more knowledgeable than Adam and equal with God. This is the religion that started all religion and is founded on mediation and caste. The serpent set out to create a caste pecking order with God being misrepresented at the top, the serpent as supreme mediator, and Eve as the goddess over humanity. Her offering of the fruit to Adam was a statement of her superiority and mediation. This religion makes division and authority-lust part and parcel with human existence and the law written on the hearts of all people stuck in the middle, and thank God for that, because otherwise, humanity would have destroyed itself long ago.

Now we may return to the Protestant salvific marketing plan. It is merely a different take on all other religions that flow from the garden soteriology (doctrine of salvation). Which again, is ALL of them. God has predetermined whether you are not chosen for salvation, viz, you never attended church, or temporarily chosen, viz, you were "faithful" to church for a while but fell away by your own decision or excommunication, or you "persevere" to the end, viz, you remain faithful to church until you die.

On the one hand, all human work has been removed from salvation, a Protestant staple for boasting (known as the "gospel of sovereignty") because God has predetermined everything and is in total control, but on the other hand, a Protestant can determine or elect God's election by staying faithful to church because God has preordained the church as His salvation institution on earth. For all

⁵<https://paulspassingthoughts.com/2018/05/21/script-how-authority-destroys-marriages/>

practical purposes, **God's choice is our choice**...if you are faithful to church and its God-given authority.

While insisting that the so-called “gospel of sovereignty” is critical to removing all human merit from salvation, well known evangelicals instruct parishioners on how to “keep yourself in the love of God.”⁶ Well known evangelicals such as John Piper write entire books on “fighting for joy” that is proof of salvation⁷ and retaining the joy of the Lord for purposes of “remaining safe”⁸

This supposedly answers the question posed by many in regard to Protestant orthodoxy in general and election in particular: “So, we do nothing in our Christian life?” Ironically, the answer follows: Yes, we determine God's predeterminism by remaining obedient to God's preordained anointed. The fact that none of them agree on hardly anything is neither here nor there, one is saved by choosing an authority and obeying them. Salvation boils down to obeying anyone claiming to have God's anointing and thereby showing ourselves “humble” and “meek.”

Those remotely familiar with church will attest to the longstanding debate within the church over the doctrine of election. Of course, like the myriad of other theological debates within the church, the election debate is predicated on the misunderstanding among Protestants concerning their own doctrine of salvation, “Justification by Faith.” Those of the Calvinist persuasion accuse the “Arminians” of propagating “easy believeism” and “works salvation” because, supposedly, any human ability or merit constitutes man's participation in salvation. Calvinists take exception to the idea that a person has the ability to choose God which employs human merit in the process, and that choice sealing their salvation forever no matter the fruits in their lives.

But what do Calvinists consider “fruit” and “works” to be? In the same way that one man's trash is another man's treasure, though the items are the same, thus it is with the election debate. Calvinists expect bad fruit from their adherents, as we have discussed prior, because we are “all sinners saved by grace” and their rejection of the biblical new birth. So, what are good fruits in the salvation process according to them? Answer: all things that are faithful to church; tithing, showing up “every time the doors are open,” and defending the church authoritarians at all cost. Remember, these things are the “means of grace” (read, “means of salvation”). In other words, anything that is a “means of grace” isn't really a work, but rather, according to the Westminster Shorter Catechism,⁹ “new obedience.” This also includes “keeping yourself in the love of God” by continually returning to the same gospel that saved you for re-justification, and remember, this can only be obtained through being a member of a church.

In contrast, Arminians insist that ANY requirement for good works before or after salvation is works salvation. Though closer to the truth, this also misses the point entirely. And, because they believe that man has the ability to choose God, they ironically attest to the idea that the “believer”

⁶<https://paulspassingthoughts.com/2013/11/30/its-simply-calvinism-you-keep-yourself-in-the-love-of-god/>

⁷<https://www.desiringgod.org/books/when-i-dont-desire-god>

⁸<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/joyless-christianity-is-dangerous>

⁹Question 87

is only required to obey once, that is, obey the gospel, but any requirement to obey afterwards is works salvation. You do a work to get saved, but afterwards abandon works to keep yourself saved as if that's not a work in and of itself. Intentional passivity is a work. All in all, the church mentality whether Calvinist or Arminian fails to understand the new birth and how its subjects serve the law of the Spirit in love rather than the law of sin and death with works.

What then, is election according to the Bible? Primarily, it is God's designated means of salvation as opposed to what self-proclaimed mediators say it is. It is God's chosen means of salvation apart from anything man does. This doesn't mean man is unable to choose God's calling and accept the gift of salvation, it means that man cannot rebirth himself; only God can do this through the Spirit. This is what saves, and such is impossible with man, but again, this doesn't mean man is unable to accept the gift by calling on God. The means of salvation is chosen by God, and those who answer the call are "the elect of God." It is a group designation, not an act of God that preselects individuals for salvation and damnation.

In addition, this doesn't mean God doesn't preselect certain individuals to participate in the unfolding of God's salvation history. God chose the apostles, but some were already saved, and one wasn't. God chose Christ and His role in salvation, but Christ obviously was never in need of salvation. God chose Israel for its part in the process, but not all Israel is saved, at least not in this age. The angels who did not rebel are God's elect angels, but the Bible never states that God preselected some for election and others for eternal torment. Indeed, it is an interesting notion that demons have no offer of salvation from God while He only pretends to offer salvation to "the many."

God makes much of the fact that He preselected the salvation process while the doctrines of self-proclaimed mediators are ALL of WORKS justification. This is the cardinal point of Romans 9, not the preselection of all human beings born into the world for salvation or damnation. In making this point, we will use the same Bible passage that John Calvin used in an effort to make his case for three classes of elect.

Much is made over any number of verses in the Bible that people will point to as a proof text for election, or Calvin's notion of "unconditional election", the idea that God chooses who will be saved and who will be damned. One such verse is Matthew 22:14, "For many are called, but few are chosen."¹⁰

To the casual reader (which unfortunately describes many "Christians" these days who are not good students of Scripture but rather leave the heavy lifting of study and critical thought to some "authority") it would appear that Jesus is indeed stating that individuals are preselected. For those who are not casual readers but actually do think critically, a simple observation of the context and grammar of the passage shows otherwise.

This verse comes at the end of the passage where Jesus gives the parable of the marriage feast. Jesus compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a king who prepares a grand feast for his son's wedding.

¹⁰ "Chosen" suggests an action while many translations have it correctly, "elect." Hence, many are called but few are the elect. This is a group designation that was chosen in Christ, not individuals who were chosen.

In the passage, the king sends out invitations, but only a few accept the invitation. The king then offers the invitation to more and more, so the wedding feast will be full of guests. The ones who reject the invitation are cast into outer darkness.

Among other things this parable teaches, one is that the “church” is not the Bride of Christ, but rather the “church” are the guests at the wedding. But this passage also gives us a clear understanding about the real doctrine of election. There is a distinction made between those who are given the invitation to come to the wedding and those who accept the invitation. It should be noted that those who reject the invitation do so by their own choice, not because God pre-ordained them to damnation.

The reason the concluding verse of this passage is so confusing, aside from man’s attempt to use orthodoxy as a means to control, is because of the lack of clarity in the grammar in English translations. The key to understanding Matthew 22:14 is that we must recognize something that is clear in the Greek but not so clear in English. The words “called” and “chosen” are adjectives and not verbs. This means that the words identify or describe a particular group and do not indicate an action.

If we assume, as the common assumption is, that “called” and “chosen” are verbs, that is not necessarily a problem with the first clause. It speaks to the sending out of an invitation. To say that many “are called” is to acknowledge that an invitation is indeed given out to men---men are called to the wedding feast; men are called to accept salvation. But if we project that same grammatical usage onto the second clause, then we would necessarily be forced to accept the idea that the ones who respond to the invitation do so not by personal choice but by God’s determination alone. But this conclusion presents us with two rationally inconsistent ideas. Why would God bother to invite all mankind if He was only going to choose a few?

Let’s take a look at the grammar of verse 14. Following is an excerpt from an electronic interlinear Bible that shows the verse parallel with the Greek text. The notations below the Greek indicate the part of speech and usage.

Matthew 22:14 ScrTR Parsing

AV For many are called, but few [are] chosen.

πολλοι γαρ εισιν κλητοι ολιγοι δε εκλεκτοι
a_Nom Pl m Conj vi Pres vxx 3 Pl a_Nom Pl m a_Nom Pl m Conj a_Nom Pl m

verb: "eis-in"
A linking verb. In English the equivalent of "to be"
I am, you are, he is, etc.

adjective: "klay-toy"
"invited"

adjective: "ek-lek-toy"
"selected" or by implication, "favored"

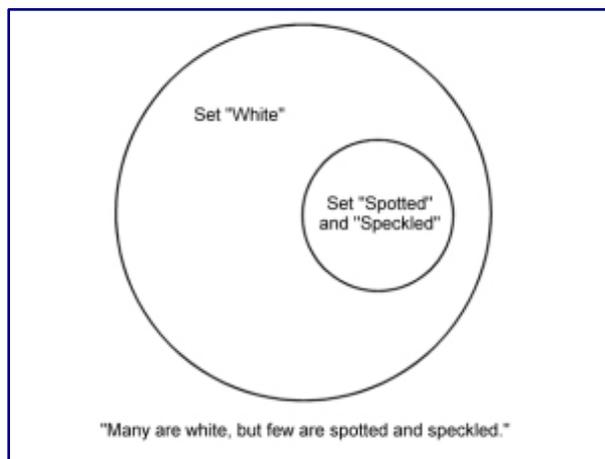
The first thing to notice is there is only one verb. The word “are” in the second clause “few are chosen” does not appear in the Greek text. Your Bible probably indicates this by having “are” italicized. As you can see by the notes above, the verb used is equivalent to the English word “is”

or “are”, and it is used here in this verse as a linking verb. When a verb is a linking verb, that means the subject and predicate can be switched, and the meaning of the clause remains the same.

This is especially important when you realize that with the exception of the two conjunctions “for” and “but,” all the other words are adjectives. Not only are they adjectives, but the notation “_Nom” that you see beneath them indicates that they are used in the *nominative* case. That means they can be used in either the subject or as a predicate nominative. And since they are all nominative case, that means that the phrases: “many are called, few are chosen” means the same as “called are many, chosen are few.”

So you can see by grammatical analysis, that the idea of “chosen” doesn’t specify an action upon a group but instead it identifies or labels a group. What you have in this verse is the identification of two sets, one named “The Called,” and another named “The Chosen.” In addition, we are given some indication as to the relative size of each group, many and few. Please keep this in mind as we move on, this is important: these are not actions, they are people groups.

Moreover, the second group is a subset of the first group. Let me give a more mundane example to help illustrate the point.



Farmer Jones has 50 white goats. 30 of them are all white, but there are 20 of them that have spots and speckles. While the larger set of all 50 goats are indeed white, a subset of them (20) have spots and speckles. So it would be accurate to say that:

“Of farmer Jones’ goats, many are white but few are spotted and speckled”

Notice that “white” and “spotted” are not verbs or actions that describe something happening to the goats, but rather they are *labels* given to identify the larger set (white) and the subset within that larger set (spotted/speckled). To say that a number of goats are white isn’t saying something “whited” them. Likewise to say that a number of goats are spotted isn’t saying something “spotted” them. They are not goats on which somebody performed the act of speckling and spotting. It is a label only.

In this same sense, in Matthew “called” and “chosen” are not verbs or actions that describe something happening to the subject, but rather they are labels given to identify the larger set (“The

Called”) and the subset within that larger set (“The Chosen”). Said another way, they are not the subject on which someone performed the act of “choosing”. It is a label only.

Here is one more example, a birthday party is coming up soon. The host sends out invitations to all his friends and family. He also decided two months prior that he was going to host this party. And when he decided to host this party, he also decided that everyone who comes to the party will receive a door prize; a small bag of candy and other treats.

Let us assume he sent out 100 invitations, but only 20 guests show up. Those 20 guests will receive the door prize. Remember, he decided that two months ago. Therefore, it could be said, that many were invited to the party, but only a few showed up to receive the prize.

Now consider this. Did he choose who would show up? No, of course not. He chose what they would receive when they arrived at the birthday party. While he did not actually choose who would show up, the ones who did received the prize. Whoever showed up was a result of those individuals who decided whether to come or not. Those who received invitations could be referred to as “The Invited.” Those who showed up to receive the prize could be referred to as “The Prized”. Therefore, many are Invited, but few are Prized.

Now consider this passage at the beginning of Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:3 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,

This is another favorite passage that many use as a proof text for the doctrine of election and determinism. But look carefully at what the apostle Paul is saying. The scenario is the same as that of the birthday party example.

	The Birthday Party	Ephesians 1:3-7
What (not <i>who</i>) was chosen?	That everyone who showed up would receive a door prize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>that</u> we should be holy and without blame before him in love • <u>that</u> we would be His children • <u>that</u> we would be accepted in the beloved • <u>that</u> we would have redemption, forgiveness of sins
When was this decided?	Two months ago	Before the foundation of the world.
Who would receive the invitation?	100 friends and family members	All mankind!
Who would receive the reward?	Everyone who showed up to the party	All those who are in Christ; those who believe; "us in Him"

Careful examination of the grammatical structure of this passage makes it clear that God did not choose who would be saved. God chose what those "in Christ" would receive.

"The Called" are those to whom God sent out the invitation to receive eternal life. "The Chosen" are the ones who accepted the invitation and received the gift that God chose to give to all those who accepted the invitation.

What is remarkable about these conclusions is they are rationally consistent with the rest of what Scripture teaches about soteriology. There is no need to perform theological gymnastics in order to force together contradicting conclusions or simply dismiss one or the other altogether. To further bolster this position, consider these verses in Ephesians that follow:

1:11 - In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Especially when we consider the theme of Ephesians which is the Jews and Gentiles being baptized into ONE body, or what the apostle Paul refers to as the one "new man," who are the "we" in these verses? Clearly, "we" refers to the Jews. Who is the "you also" in these verses? Clearly, this refers to the Gentiles. Hence, according to the riches of God's grace, people groups (the Prized, if you will) were predetermined to be in Christ, not individuals.

Our last consideration is a return to Matthew 22. Immediately following the wedding feast parable, the Jews were pushed over the edge so to speak. This is when they set out to trap him into saying something that could be used to bring Him up on charges. Why? The Jews knew that Christ was referring to the nation of Israel, not individuals in general. The Jews took much pride in being

God's chosen people. One who was circumcised as a Jew was guaranteed salvation according to Jewish tradition. In the parable, Jesus suggested something that outraged the Jews: of the many called which includes the Gentiles, a sore spot for the Jews to begin with, few Jews would end up being the elect. This did not go over well, but again drives the point further home; the Jewish leaders knew who was referring to groups, not individuals.

The church is not the elect. Its soteriology is not that elected of God, therefore, those who advocate its non-elected gospel do not inherit the blessings of God. The inheritance was chosen before the foundation of the world, not individuals. The church is not God's preordained means of grace, but rather "The Promise" of new birth for those who call on the Lord.