

Major Bible Themes

52 Vital Doctrines of the Scriptures Simplified and Explained

Adapted from the book *Major Bible Themes*
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Divine Election

- Introduction
 - Definitions
 - ✦ Election – an act or process of choosing
 - Elect – one who has been chosen
 - ✦ Sovereignty – supreme power
 - ✦ Volition – the power to exercise one’s will in choosing
 - ✦ Foreknowledge – advance knowledge
 - ✦ Predetermined – fixed or settled in advance
 - ✦ Called – invited, summoned
 - According to the Scriptures, there can be no doubt that divine election is a matter of fact.
 - The descendants of Jacob were chosen by God to be a people (nation) for His own possession (Deut 7:6; Ps 105:6; 135:4).
 - All believers from all dispensations are chosen by God to receive eternal salvation (Luke 18:7; Rom 8:33; 2 Thess 2:13; Matt 24:22).
 - Believers today are chosen in Christ to be part of a unique body of believers known as the Church, another people for God’s own possession (Eph 1:4; 1 Pet 2:9).
 - To correctly understand election, we have to understand the relationship between God’s sovereignty and man’s volition.
- Three Views of God’s Sovereignty and Man’s Volition
 - Calvinism (John Calvin) – Emphasis on God’s sovereignty
 - ✦ Total Depravity: Man has no ability to respond to the grace of God and come to Christ.
 - ✦ Unconditional Election: God has chosen some people to go to heaven and others to go to hell and the individuals themselves are not in any way involved.
 - ✦ Limited Atonement: Jesus Christ died only for the elect.
 - ✦ Irresistible Grace: Man cannot resist God’s grace as saving faith comes from God and man has no choice but to believe.
 - ✦ Perseverance of the Saints: The elect will live holy lives to the end. If you fail to persevere, you were not truly elect.

- Arminianism (Jacob Arminius) – Emphasis on man’s ability
 - ✦ Partial Depravity: Some facets of man’s nature have not been corrupted. Guilt not imputed.
 - ✦ Conditional Election: God chooses individuals based upon their foreseen merits.
 - ✦ Governmental Atonement: Jesus Christ died for everyone and this makes salvation possible for the repentant.
 - ✦ Resistible Grace: Man may refuse to repent of sins and thereby not qualify for salvation.
 - ✦ Perseverance of the Saints: Individuals remain saved only as long as they persevere. If you fail to persevere, you lose your salvation.
- Biblicism (God) – Emphasis on what the Bible says
 - ✦ Total Depravity: Mankind was corrupted by the fall and can do nothing to earn/deserve eternal life. Man can respond to grace.
 - ✦ Unmerited Election: God chooses individuals without regard to merit based solely upon faith in Jesus Christ.
 - ✦ Limitless Atonement: Jesus Christ died for all mankind. His death is sufficient for everyone, but effective only for those who believe.
 - ✦ Instrumental Grace: God’s grace enables man to hear and comprehend the gospel. Some resist and remain condemned.
 - ✦ Preservation of the Saints: God preserves those who believe. Salvation cannot be lost even for those who disobey God.
- Biblical Understanding of Election
 - Election and Foreknowledge
 - ✦ God is outside of space and time, so the foreknowledge of God is merely one view of His omniscience from a temporal perspective.
 - ✦ God’s omniscience (foreknowledge) is not limited to the things which actually occur in history (1 Sam 23:9-13; Matt 11:21-24).
 - ✦ Because God’s omniscience (foreknowledge) encompasses all possibilities – those that happen and those that don’t – it does not in any way limit our choice to either believe or reject the gospel.
 - ✦ We are chosen according to the omniscience (foreknowledge) of God the Father (1 Pet 1:1-2) who has always known that some would believe in the Savior and others would not.
 - Election and Predetermination
 - ✦ God predetermined that those He foreknew (believers in this context) would be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29).
 - ✦ God predetermined that the Church would be a mystery, hidden in God (Eph 3:9) for ages until the time was right (1 Cor 2:7).
 - ✦ God predetermined that believers today are adopted as sons through Jesus Christ (Eph 1:5).

- ✦ God predetermined that believers today will receive an inheritance (Eph 1:11) pledged to us in the giving of the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:14).
 - ✦ The Bible says nothing about God predetermining who will believe and who will not believe.
- Election and God's Will
- ✦ God demonstrates His Sovereign Will in five ways...
 - Decretive – what He has decreed to be
 - Directive – what He has commanded us to do
 - Permissive – what He allows us to do in our disobedience
 - Overruling – what He does not allow to happen if we disobey
 - Discretionary – what He leaves open for us to choose
 - ✦ It is God's desire that everyone be saved (2 Pet 3:9), but we know that not everyone trusts in Jesus Christ, so we can clearly see that God does not force people to believe even though He could.
- Do we believe on our own or does God give us the faith?
- ✦ There are no verses found in the Bible (including Isa 64:6) that indicate that unregenerate fallen man cannot believe.
 - ✦ Doesn't Eph 2:8-9 say that faith is a gift of God?
 - The word "that" in Eph 2:8 is τοῦτο (touto) – a neuter pronoun.
 - Pronouns need an "antecedent" to refer back to.
 - However, there are no neuter nouns in Eph 2:8.
 - A study of similar passages in the Bible (e.g. Mt 14:2; Eph 6:1) shows us that τοῦτο (touto) can refer to the verb action.
 - ∴ The free gift is salvation received through faith in Christ.
- Does our faith add works to our salvation?
- ✦ The work of salvation was completed to perfection by Jesus Christ on the cross (John 19:30).
 - ✦ Romans 3:27-28 and 4:4-5 make it very clear that faith is not an act of work.
 - ✦ By placing our faith in Jesus Christ, we add no works to His perfect work, but merely accept the work that He has done on our behalf (John 6:29).
- We are free to choose whether or not to trust in Christ for salvation only because God in His sovereignty has granted us the authority to make that choice.
- Examples of God delegating authority to man
- ✦ God allows mankind to rule over the animal kingdom (Gen 1:26).
 - ✦ God gave authority to Adam to name the animals (Gen 2:19).
 - ✦ God gave authority to governments to execute justice (Gen 9:6).
 - ✦ God gave authority to the apostles (2 Cor 10:8; 13:10).
 - ✦ God gave spouses authority over one another's bodies (1 Cor 7:4).
 - ✦ God gave man authority over his own will to make decisions in his heart (1 Cor 7:37).

- Because God has granted us the authority to choose, He invites (calls) us to believe.
- Calling versus Election
 - ✦ All believers are called by God through the gospel (2 Thess 2:14), but not all who are called accept the invitation (Matt 22:1-14).
 - ✦ God calls us to Himself (Acts 2:39) into His kingdom and glory (1 Thess 2:12).
 - ✦ This invitation is offered to Jews and Gentiles alike (1 Cor 1:24).
 - ✦ This invitation is according to God's purpose (Rom 8:28).
 - ✦ This invitation comes by/through the grace of God (Gal 1:6, 15).
 - ✦ This invitation is both holy (2 Tim 1:9) and heavenly (Heb 3:1).
 - ✦ This invitation is the basis for our sainthood (Rom 1:6; 1 Cor 1:2).
 - ✦ Those who accept this invitation and trust in Christ become part of the body of body of believers chosen in Christ (Eph 1:4).
 - ✦ As believers we have been invited to a life...
 - of fellowship with Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:9).
 - of hope (Eph 1:18; 4:4).
 - of peace (1 Cor 7:15; Col 3:15).
 - of freedom (Gal 5:13).
 - of honor and purity (1 Thess 4:3-7).
 - with an eternal perspective (1 Tim 6:12).
 - ✦ Being called and being chosen are not the same thing, but all who are chosen are called (2 Pet 1:10; Rev 17:14).
 - ✦ Additional callings/invitations...
 - into service (Mk 1:20; Rom 11:29; Acts 13:2; 16:10; Heb 5:4).
 - to make a change of residence (Matt 2:15; Heb 11:8).
- The How and Why of our Election
 - ✦ Believers in the Church are chosen in Christ (Eph 1:4) as a body of believers, not individually.
 - ✦ We are chosen...
 - to shame the wise and the things which are strong (1 Cor 1:27).
 - to nullify the things that are (1 Cor 1:28).
 - that we might be holy and blameless before God (Eph 1:4).
 - to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom (Jas 2:5).
 - ✦ We are not chosen to be believers; we are chosen *as believers* by God for these purposes.
- Conclusions
 - God, in His sovereignty, has laid out His perfect A to Ω plan – a plan which included permitting the fall of mankind, but also provides a way of salvation for all mankind.
 - God, in His sovereignty, has provided everything to make this salvation a gift freely available and has granted man the ability to volitionally accept or reject this gift from God.

- God, in His sovereignty, has chosen to make this free gift of salvation available to everyone and in His perfectly crafted plan only those who choose to believe in His provision of salvation (Jesus Christ) will receive the free gift.
- God, in His sovereignty, places everyone in the circumstances and conditions within which they live their lives and He is fully aware of how these circumstances and conditions will affect the choices they will make.
- God, in His sovereignty, has chosen all believers between Pentecost and the Rapture to be a unique body of believers known as the Church.
- God, in His sovereignty, has chosen the people of Israel – believers and unbelievers alike – to be a unique nation called out from among the peoples of the earth.
- God, in His sovereignty, invites believers to live a life of holiness and spiritual abundance.
- God, in His sovereignty, provides blessing for believers in accordance with His purpose.
- Divine election is not a process whereby God predetermined those who would and would not believe.
- Divine election is a process whereby God exercises His sovereignty in choosing groups of people according to His perfect plan to serve a specific purpose within that plan.
- Questions
 - Define the terms election, elect, sovereignty, volition, foreknowledge, predetermined and called.
 - Is divine election a biblical fact?
 - Name the different people groups chosen by God.
 - Compare and contrast Calvinism, Arminianism, and Biblicism.
 - How is God's foreknowledge related to His omniscience?
 - How is God's foreknowledge related to divine election?
 - Has God predetermined who will believe and who will not?

- How is God's will related to divine election?
- Do we believe on our own or does God give us the faith?
- Does our faith add works to our salvation?
- Does our ability to choose come from God?
- Name some ways God has delegated authority to man.
- What is the difference between calling and election?
- Does God call (invite) people to believe in His Son?
- Does everyone accept the invitation?
- What kind of life are believers called to?
- How are Church Age believers chosen?
- For what purpose did God choose us?
- Is God's provision of salvation available to everyone?
- In your own words, describe divine election.