

Election

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Date: 03 November 2019

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[0 : 0 0] Well, most of you know this opening illustration, and it's a very common one. In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, C.S. Lewis pictures a world in the grip of winter that's been going on for over a hundred years.

And of course it's always winter, but it's never Christmas. And only when Aslan lands on the shore does the winter begin to break.

And as the story goes along, in order to save Edmund, who's betrayed Aslan and the other children, Aslan sacrifices himself.

In the story, he's tied to a stone table, and there he's killed, he's sacrificed. But he rises again.

And after the sudden resurrection, this unlooked-for resurrection, Susan, the oldest girl, asks, But what does this all mean?

[1 : 1 0] What does this all mean? And she's asking, How did this happen? Well, what's going on here? And Aslan answered, It means that though the witch knew the deep magic, there's a magic deeper still which she did not know.

Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of time. But if she could have looked a little further back into the stillness and the darkness before time dawned, she would have read a different incantation.

She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the table would crack and death itself would start working backwards.

Aslan's answer is that there's a deeper magic that comes before time that's at work here in this situation. But it isn't just in the land of Narnia where a deeper magic from before time happens.

In the Bible, God reveals that there is eternal love, an eternal plan, a deeper magic from before even time began that is at work in our salvation.

[2 : 3 1] And the Bible says that we are in the grips of this plan, of this deeper magic that comes before time. Our Lion King is a lamb and Revelation 13.8 says that he was slain from the foundation of the world.

Now, the Lord was not slain before creation. He was slain on a particular day. But the plan, the decree, the predestination was already in place.

And so it's as if he was slain from the foundation of the world. Paul says there's a mystery at work. In the Bible, in the New Testament, when the Bible talks about mystery, it's something that's been planned for a long time, that's been in the works, that everything has been working to, but yet it's still been covered up.

And now, in Jesus Christ, that mystery is revealed. So turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 3. Paul says there's a mystery at work, and it's revealed in Jesus.

So Ephesians chapter 3. And let me just read verses 2 through 6.

[3 : 57] And if you would follow along, I want you to pay attention and look for this mystery and what it is and what's come of it. Ephesians 3.2.

Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you. That is, and this is what this administration of God's grace is, that is the mystery made known to me by revelation.

As I've already written briefly in reading this, then you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men and other generations, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

This mystery is that through the gospel, the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise of Christ Jesus.

Now, this is personal for us, because what the mystery that he is talking about is that, and this is why we can't read this without a thrill, that we, as Gentiles, there's been something hidden in God's heart for a long time.

[5 : 20] A plan. A purpose. Something that he was going to do. This deeper magic is stored up from before time, and Paul is saying, in Christ, that has burst forth.

And now, Jews and Gentiles are brought together. Christ's life, his whole life, happened according to God's set purpose and foreknowledge.

That's Acts 2.23. They did only what God's power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Acts 4.28. He was chosen.

Isaiah 42.1 says, Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight. And so, in him, God's long-held, long-mysterious, long-hidden plans are revealed.

And we have been caught up in this mystery, this plan, this deeper magic from before time. And that's what we're talking about today in our class.

[6 : 25] It's the doctrine of election. Now, maybe to help clarify something. We're talking about election. We're also talking about predestination.

Election and predestination are sort of like fraternal twins. They're born at the same time. They came out of the same womb. But they're slightly different.

They look different. They are different. So, how are they different? Well, when the Bible talks about election, it's talking about God choosing people.

The choice, the object, is a person or people. It's God putting his name on a person or a people. It's God's choice of that person himself.

It's where he says, You are mine. He claims us. It's like in eternity past. I don't know if people still do this, but it's Christmas season.

[7 : 22] And what they'll do is they put something on layaway. They put their name on it and it's reserved for them. And it's sort of like God put us on layaway.

And then it came time to pay for us and to really purchase us. And Jesus came and laid down his life and God paid for us. He chose us. He claimed us in election.

Predestination. That's election. Predestination emphasizes what God chose us for. So, election is the choice of a person.

Predestination is what God chose us for. So, God elected Jesus Christ. Isaiah 42, 1. You're my chosen one.

Predestination talks about what God chose him for. So, Acts 4.28, we already quoted this, what his will and power had decided beforehand should happen. So, God chose Jesus Christ and he predestined him to die on the cross.

[8 : 29] Romans 8.28, God chose and predestined us to be conformed to the likeness of his son. So, the choice was the person. The predestination was that we would bear the image and the likeness of his son.

That we would be glorified. And what that means by glorified is that Christ would be completely filled up in us. That we would be like him. 1 Corinthians 2.7 Again, we speak of God's secret wisdom.

A wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. God had our glory, our glorification in mind.

That's what he has predestined us for. Ephesians 1.5, we were predestined to be adopted. So, he chooses but then he predestines us to be adopted.

Ephesians 1.12, we are predestined to fulfill his purpose. So, God chooses us and then in that choice he predestines us to fulfill his purpose.

[9 : 48] And what's his purpose? That we might be to the praise of his glory. God has predestined us as his people to the praise of his glory.

That we would glorify him. That we would glorify his grace. So, in short, do you see the difference? Election is the choice of, the selection, the choice of a person or a people.

And predestination is what he chooses us for. And so, for glory. For bearing the likeness of Jesus Christ. For adoption. Now, that should thrill your hearts.

That there is something going on here that is not just in this time and in this place and in your little life. But, you have been caught up.

You have been caught up in what God has been planning and pursuing from, since before the foundation of the earth. Your part in this story and how you're going to fulfill it has long been in the making.

[10 : 56] He foreknew you. He knew you. He loved you beforehand. And, it was waiting for just the right time. that should encourage your hearts.

Sometimes, I think, people think, and Sinclair Ferguson has mentioned this, that Christians have a tendency, unless they have some sort of spectacular conversion story or some sort of spectacular martyrdom, Christians have this tendency to think, well, I'm just an ordinary Christian.

But, even to be an ordinary Christian is amazing. It's profound and amazing.

So, what does the Bible teach about election? And, this is what we want to look at for the rest of our time. What does the Bible teach us about election? Well, first we want to talk about the Old Testament.

Because, the Old Testament is full of this imagery. Sometimes it's direct, and sometimes it's just illustrated. It's explicit. It's explicitly said numerous times, and it's illustrated repeatedly again and again.

[12 : 13] So, Noah had three sons. He had Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And, God chooses Shem's family, Shem, to be the line that he is going to work through.

And, this is going back all the way to that first gospel promise that God gave to Eve that he said, someone from your seed, the seed of the woman, is going to crush the head of the serpent.

There is this family, there is this person that is going to come from the woman that is going to destroy the devil. And, so, there's the seed of the woman, this line, this lineage, and, so, God chooses, he has Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Those are the three boys, those are the three, and God chooses Shem. Now, Shem had a son named, and you could read this in Genesis chapter 9 and 10, Shem had a son named Arphaxad, I don't know how to really pronounce that, and it says he had many other sons and daughters.

So, Shem had lots of children. Lots. So many they don't even mention. He lived a long time. He had a lot of children.

[13 : 29] He had other sons and daughters. It wasn't like Arphaxad was the only one, but God chose him. And, Mr. A there had Shelah, and he had many other sons and daughters, but the seed of the woman would come through this man named Shelah.

And on and on it went until Nahor had Terah, and Terah had three sons. And to one of those sons, out of now thousands, probably millions, of Shemites by this time, the Lord said to Abram, leave your country and go to the place I'll show you.

You see, God's choice was constantly at work. The Lord chose Abram, and not for any reason in himself, but because an eternity passed, he had elected him and he had predestined him for this, to be the father of the faithful.

Now, Abram had other sons. Isaac was not his only son. He had others, eventually he had other sons, but it was Isaac. And Isaac had Esau and Jacob, these twins, but the promise goes to Jacob because Jacob was better than Esau?

Not at all. Jacob was a deceiver, but to show the glory of God's grace, he chose the younger, he chose the tricky one, the deceptive one, and he said the older will serve the younger.

[15 : 07] father. So then, Jacob has 12 sons, and Israel was God's chosen people.

And then the question always is, why? And this is so important for us because when we ask those kinds of questions of why was I made to hear your voice and enter why was I chosen?

We can come to the wrong conclusion. religion. This happens, I hope, it doesn't happen very often with people who really believe this, but it happens where people think, oh, God has chosen me, and it makes them proud.

It makes them abusive. It makes them holier than thou. So why did God choose Israel? Deuteronomy 7, the Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than the other peoples.

It wasn't like you were the best option out there. for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it was because the Lord loved you and kept this oath that he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery.

[16 : 18] So why did God choose them? Not because of who they were. You need to realize that. God didn't choose you because of who you were.

So big and so great and so important. then Deuteronomy 9, after the Lord, your God has driven them out before you, do not say to yourself, and again, this is our tendency.

This is the tendency of what people do. The Lord has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness. Understand then that it is not because of your righteousness that the Lord, your God has given you this good land to possess for you are a stiff-necked people.

It wasn't like Israel was just like these oh so willing people. Oh, Lord, please choose me. They weren't like that.

They didn't want to serve him. They were a stiff-necked people. What does that say about free will? It wasn't they were stiff.

[17 : 27] They were stubborn towards God. you get the picture. It was grace. It was mercy. Justice. God giving people what they do has nothing to do with election.

So let's go on and let's talk about what Jesus said about election. Because again, we want to lay this foundation here and say, you know what, this is not just a few verses here and there that maybe people have misread or misunderstood.

When you build an entire doctrine on just a few verses, sometimes it is very tenuous. This is not a doctrine built on three verses. This is a doctrine that is interwoven throughout the entire Bible.

So what does Jesus himself say about election? And again, I'm putting this in here because a lot of people say, oh, that's what Paul said. But that's not what Jesus said. People like the Jesus of their imagination.

And in our world, in our day, you can find a thousand articles about how Jesus agrees with whatever anyone ever says. You can find someone that says, this is how Jesus really was.

[18 : 36] Well, what did Jesus really say? Matthew 25, 34. This is a parable Jesus is teaching us.

Then the king will say to those on his right, that is his lambs, his sheep, they're his people as opposed to the goats. Come, you who are blessed by my father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

This is you and this kingdom have been destined for each other from the creation of the world. So how long have they been bound! for this kingdom since the beginning.

He had chosen them. This was their destiny. Matthew 11, all things have been committed to be by my father. No one knows the son except the father. And no one knows the father except the son and those to whom the son chooses to reveal him.

Then the very next verse, the very next sentence says, come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Now what is Jesus saying there?

[19 : 55] This is a very helpful passage. Jesus is saying two things are really true. One is not more true than the other.

One is not less true than the other. He's saying two things that are really true. He's saying one no one knows the father in an intimate way. He's talking about no one has a relationship with God the father except the son chooses to reveal the father to him.

That's true. But equally true the very next sentence after that. So unless you think Jesus is a madman and is talking nonsense which we can't say then this is true too.

Anyone weary and burdened are invited. If you come to Jesus saying I need to know the father you're the way you're the truth you're the life Jesus says I'll give you rest I'll bring you and the father together in John Jesus puts it this way in the book of John I am the bread of life he who comes to me will never go hungry!

That's the invitation and it's to all it's open to all it's to you if you want him you can have him if you need him and you feel your need for him and you come to him he will give himself to you and so if you're hungry or thirsty you don't have to be so if you have that spiritual emptiness and that spiritual need and that spiritual desire that is as basic and as fundamental and as dire as hunger or thirst if you need Jesus that way Jesus says you can have me but in the very same passage in the next sentence this is what he says but as I told you you've seen me and still you do not believe all that the father gives me will come to me and whoever comes to me I will never drive away for I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will the one who sent me that

[22 : 13] I shall lose none of all that he has given me but raise them up on the last day so the father gives to his son a people that's election and he says and I will raise them up on the last day that's our predestination that's what God has chosen our destiny so both are true hungry thirsty need Jesus you can have him and on the other hand the Lord has his people and so let no one stay away wondering am I elect let no one stay away or let no one who has come to Jesus wonder well maybe it's not true maybe I'm not elect maybe I'm not predestined the way the

Bible presents election and predestination it's really for two reasons the one is to is to it is to confound the pride of men Jesus makes that clear when people heard this it offended them and they walked away that's one thing it is for the second thing election is for comfort it's for the comfort of God's people it it's not a third thing it is not a barrier that people have to get to or get around a turnstile that you have to get through in order to get to Jesus do you see that it it's to humble us it is to comfort us it is not meant as something to keep us away from Jesus and so if you want

Jesus this is what this is the gospel message that if right now if you need Jesus then you can take him he's the truth he's the way he's the life but here's the comfort and the strength Jesus speaks to all of those who come to him and he says you're my chosen ones you didn't choose me I chose you it's it's not this whole thing is not hinging on how powerful how great your will is and your determination to have me no I want you nobody and here this is the comfort nobody ever including you and you can put your name here including me have ever foisted or imposed himself or herself on Jesus if you come to him it's because he was coming to you if you call out to him it's because he was calling out to you if you sought him it was because he was seeking you if you chose him it was only because he first chose you election is for your comfort he loves you he prays for you this is for your assurance not for your doubt we aren't unwanted barnacles on the

Lord's side we are his loved ones in whom is all his delight and he has loved us from beginning from the beginning of time so let's go to the apostle Paul and now we could go to a lot of different passages here but I want to turn to Romans chapter 9 turn to Romans chapter 9 and we want to continue to sharpen and to continue to bring into focus what the Bible teaches about election so I hope we can see that it's not just a New Testament thing it's not just a Paul thing this is all over the Old Testament God chooses David the youngest brother to be the king it's not opposed to evangelism it's not meant to be a barrier for people to come to

Jesus it's meant rather to assure and to comfort those who have now we go to Romans chapter 9 and before we read a bit of this I want to give you an airplane 10,000 30,000 foot view of the book of Romans the first four chapters of the book of Romans is really the heart of the gospel the gospel is how can sinful men be made righteous with a holy God before a holy God how can they be right with God and it's not because of works it's because it's through faith and so as chapter four ends it's it has really tied up this this is the gospel this is how sinful men are made right and so the thing is now

[28 : 00] I'm right with God I am right with God my sins are forgiven and then all sorts of questions start to come up and what about sin what about the trials I go through what about my indwelling sin what about the power of sin in my life is there any hope for me and chapters five really all the way through chapter eleven but especially chapters five through eight is all about our hope the hope that we have because we are right with God there is hope for us in our fight against sin because sin no longer has dominion over us there's hope in the face of our indwelling sin because we have the Holy Spirit living in us there's there's hope in the face of trials and the frustrations and the pain of this world because the

Holy Spirit lives within us and groans and together we groan as we long for the creation the recreation of all things and Paul is saying this is our hope we have hope God's purposes cannot fail not in the face of trials not in the face of difficulties not in the face of our own sin we have hope God's purpose is not going to fail and that's sort of how Romans 8:28 Romans 8 through the end of chapter 8 ends with now what can separate us from the love of God God's love God's purposes God's goodwill is stronger than anything that we can face his purposes will not fail then someone comes up with a problem and this is something

I'm sure that Paul himself thought of because he brings it up in chapters 9-11 Paul talks about this major problem this real sticking point when we say our hope lives on and God's purposes won't fail and the problem is what about Israel what about them doesn't it seem like God's purposes for them have failed they rejected their Messiah remember this goes all the way back remember what we talked about this is Genesis chapter 3 this first promise the seed of the woman now here Israel is there and what's happened the Messiah has come and Israel for the most part have not believed and doesn't that make it seem like in this case God's plan and purposes have failed and if that happened to

Israel doesn't that mean that maybe that could happen to us and if it happened to them how will we know if it won't happen to us so that's the big question that Paul is trying to answer in Romans 9 through 11 to say that no not even in the case of Israel did God's election and predestination fail God's purposes did not fail so you can see that look at verse 6 you can see what he's talking about it is not as though God's word has failed for not all who are descended from Israel are Israel so Paul's heart was for the Israelites that's where all this comes from his agony for them his desire to see them saved and yet what's going on they had such promise they had such they had all these good things going for them you can see that in one through five and yet there it seems like their hope has failed that

God's word has failed well he's saying no for not all who are descended from Israel or Israel well who is Israel then who's God's real chosen people look at verse 11 yet before the twins were born Esau and Jacob before they had done anything good or bad in order that God's purpose and election might stand not by works but by him who calls that is God who calls she was told that the older will serve the younger just as it is written!

[32 : 53] Jacob I have loved but Esau I hated so that's what he's saying it's not it is not you need to understand that God's purpose was at work even in Israel God's election was even at work in Israel now if how do you know if you're teaching or if you're understanding and speaking this doctrine biblically and how do you know if you're really understanding it biblically and teaching it right well you should be getting a certain kind of objection if you are not getting this objection that we're going to talk about next you probably aren't teaching it properly and then so you see what it says in verse 14 what then shall we say is God unjust you see the objection oh that's not right that's unjust and

Paul's answer is not oh wait wait a second I guess I didn't I didn't mean to say it that way let me rephrase that let me teach it in such a way that so it doesn't look in any way like God is unjust that that's not his answer his answer is this is not about justice you are in the wrong category you're bringing up something that is not what it's not something that you really want to bring up we're not talking about justice we're talking about mercy I will have mercy election is not about justice it is about mercy I will have mercy on whom I have mercy I will have compassion on whom I have compassion if you want justice you get hell every single person there's no point in talking about that it's not fair because fair has nothing to do with it fair is hell fair is condemnation sinful men cannot plead before a holy god on the grounds of justice on what he deserves our only plea our only hope is mercy so it does not therefore depend on man's desire or effort this is not about man being good or doing good or trying really hard it depends on god's mercy but again if you're teaching election right people are going to have an objection if you're understanding what paul is saying here another objection should come up it's verse 19 one of you will say to me then why does god still blame us for who resists his will and paul's answer is man who are you to talk back to god now we need to read this objection right this objection is not a humble man wrestling with man's responsibility and

God's sovereignty it is not a man who is humbly trying to figure this out that is not the heart behind this objection and when people give it in the real world it is not a humble wondering this is a rebel creature throwing a fit about how God is ruling his world how the Lord runs his world this is a piece of clay belittling the potter and that's why Paul's answer is oh man who are you to talk back to God is your attitude humble no are you letting God be God no again you want to be

God you want to do things the way you want them done you're passing judgment on God and you are the sinner you as the sinner are sitting in the judgment seat with God in the dock with God saying being accused and so Paul's answer is you're completely out of you're not even close to the right categories it's not about your judgment it's not about your mercy it's about his mercy it's not about whether you get what you want he's God and so really we've we've come full circle here this morning you remember where we started with our our memory verse with man saying God you need me you need me you need my sacrifices you need my worship you you need me you need me you answer to me and the

Bible's answer is 180 degrees opposed to that we need him and here God says it's not about your mercy whether you're going to have mercy on me for the decisions I've made it's God saying it's not about your mercy oh foolish man it's about my mercy and so this is where we're going to end this is our God this is our God who will not fear him who will not humble themselves before him we're dismissed and we're going to have a time to and have!