

BRIEFLY CORRECTING ERRANT VIEWS ON DIVINE ELECTION

VII. Biblically Explaining Key Passages On Foreknowledge

I. Introduction

- A. Many believers struggle to understand and/or to accept the teachings they hear or read about divine election.
- B. Actually, much error exists on the doctrine, so it needs to be explained in a brief but thorough, Biblical way.
- C. We offer a seven-lesson series on election, and in this last lesson, we explain key passages on foreknowledge:

II. Biblically Explaining Key Passages On Foreknowledge.

- A. Arminians teach that God in eternity past foreknew the meritorious faith people would author to help justify themselves, so God chose them to be justified. In contrast, John Calvin taught that God foreknows what He predestined to occur in electing who will trust in Christ so that "it is absurd" to make God's predestination subordinate to His foreknowledge. (John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Bk. III, Ch. XXI, Sec. 5 and Ch. XXII, Sec. 1, trans. Henry Beveridge, 1972, vol. II, p. 206, 212; Samuel Fisk, Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom, 1973, p. 71-72)
- B. First, we study key Bible passages to evaluate the views of Arminians and Calvinists on God's foreknowledge:
 1. We view key Bible passages to evaluate the Arminian view of divine foreknowledge:
 - a. Ephesians 2:8-9 teaches that man is saved by grace through faith without human merit, so God would *not* have foreknown a *meritorious* faith in those who would believe so as to choose them to be justified.
 - b. Also, we before learned that God's foreknowledge would not be an awareness of who would believe so that He could elect them to be justified, for making justification the result of election is an errant belief!
 2. We view key Bible passages to evaluate John Calvin's view on divine foreknowledge:
 - a. In Romans 8:29 KJV, Paul wrote, "For whom he [God] did foreknow, he also did predestinate . . ." and "the particle of graduation, *also (kai in the Greek text)*" indicates . . . successive degrees of divine action," meaning foreknowledge **differs** from predestination! (Ibid., Fisk, p. 75, citing F. Godet, Commentary On St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Vol. II, pp. 108-110)
 - b. In addition, Matthew 11:23 reveals that God can know something to be a fact without having predestined it to occur: Jesus there claimed that if the mighty works He had performed in Capernaum had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until His day! Christ's knowledge of Sodom's possible alternate destiny was **knowledge** about something that **God did NOT predestine to occur**.
- C. Second, we view the Bible passages that have the Greek words on foreknowledge to discern the truth about it:
 1. The Greek **noun *prognosis*** occurs in Acts 2:23 and in 1 Peter 1:2 where it is translated "foreknowledge."
 2. The Greek **verb *proginosko*** occurs in five passages but it is translated in **different ways** by various English versions: it is translated "foreknow" in Romans 8:29 and 11:2, "foreordained" (KJV), "chosen" (NIV), or "foreknown" (ESV) in 1 Peter 1:20, and "know [beforehand]" in Acts 26:5 and 2 Peter 3:17.
 3. As for ***proginosko*** in 2 Peter 3:17, **Peter's readers "knew beforehand"** what would occur in the end of the universe since **GOD and NOT Peter's readers had foreordained** these future events to occur! Thus, ***proginosko* CANNOT** mean "foreordain" in 2 Peter 3:17, but **only** "to know beforehand."
 4. As for ***proginosko*** in 1 Peter 1:20 where (according to various versions) Christ was "foreordained," "chosen," or "foreknown" before the foundation of the world, this verb **can** mean simply "foreknown."
 5. Finally, nowhere else in secular or non-Christian religious literature in Classical or Koine Greek, the language of the New Testament, or the Septuagint does ***proginosko*** mean more than "know beforehand." As C. Gordon Olson who once taught Calvinism for twenty years observed, "It would seem that centuries of lexicographic tradition have read into the seven New Testament usages of the noun [***prognosis***] and verb [***proginosko***] a meaning inconsistent with New Testament usage." (C. Gordon Olson, "Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism: Toward An Amyraldian Soteriology," a paper delivered at the Evangelical Theological Society Meeting at Toronto, December 29, 1981. We do **not** agree with Olson's **Amyraldian** view on divine **election**, but we **do** agree with his **observations** and **conclusion** on ***prognosis*** and ***proginosko***.)
 6. We conclude that the noun ***prognosis*** and the verb ***proginosko*** in the New Testament mean simply to "know beforehand" and not "foreordained" or "chosen" or any other meaning that implies predestination.

Lesson: In agreement with our definition on divine election back in lesson two in this series, we find that God's foreknowledge involves His knowledge of people He knew from eternity past who would believe in Christ, and His predestination that was based on that knowledge involved His arranging for those people whom He foreknew as His people to be moved into positions of blessing that would follow their justification status.