

How Salvation Became Available: What is Atonement? What is Atonement?

Introduction

Why do I need to be saved?

What am I being saved from?

What is salvation?

Salvation is simply the reconciliation of a broken relationship with God.

This separation is created by sin.

Sin is a transgression or offense against God which makes one unholy, and if you're not set apart or righteous in the eyes of God, you cannot have a relationship.

Because God is holy, pure and perfect, He cannot be in the presence of sin.

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At – Onement

Salvation begins with the concept of atonement.

But the term "atonement" is not found in the Bible; how was this concept introduced and what does it mean?

The word "atonement" was conceived and coined by William Tyndale in the sixteenth century to address a translation problem. The nearest English translation for the Hebrew term "kippur" was "reconciliation"; however, it did not include the concepts of "satisfying the wrath of God" and "forgiveness" that the Hebrew term conveyed.

Thus "at" and "onement" was created to embody the ideas of

"remission of sin",

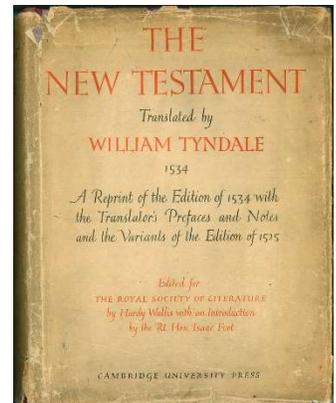
"satisfying the wrath of God" and

"reconciliation to God."

The Bible is clear why atonement is necessary for human beings.

1. Human beings are born with sin. By nature, we are sinful, prideful, and have desires for selfish indulgences.
2. By refusing to conform to the moral law of God in action, attitude and nature, we are separated from the presence of God.
3. In accordance to God's judicial standard, the penalty for sin is death.
4. Regardless of our best effort, we cannot meet God's moral standard nor atone for our own sins or earn our own salvation. Being good does not absolve us of our sins.

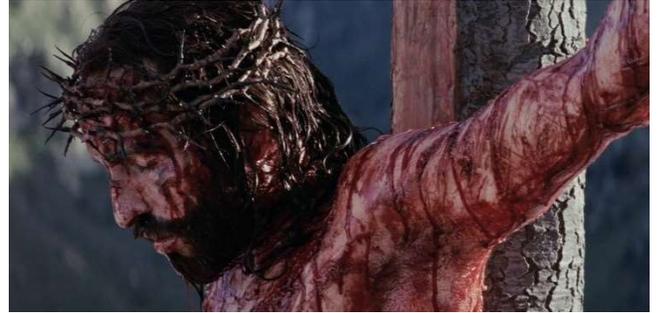
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Crucifixion

The basis for atonement is found in the crucifixion of Jesus where he suffered physical, spiritual and mental agony by this Roman form of execution.

The phrase "Passion of Christ" was coined to describe this suffering, and it originated from the King James translation of Acts 1:3 – "*To whom also he shewed himself alive after his **passion** by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.*"



However, to understand the concept of atonement, one needs to understand what the crucifixion did. Jesus alludes to this in His last words, "It is finished."

He was making a reference to something He accomplished with His death.

And the Greek verb for "finished" was in the perfect tense, indicative mood and passive voice which meant that Jesus was referring to an ongoing work accomplished by His death.

Until the disciples understood this, they were set to desert Him and resume their prior lives.

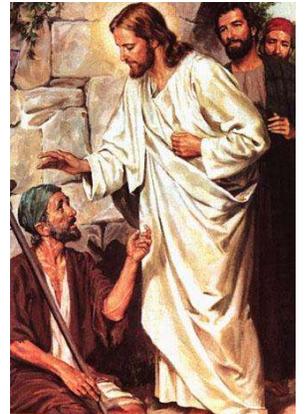
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Why focus on the death of Jesus Christ instead of His extraordinary life?

This is a great question! Jesus' life is attractive for His moral quality!

But it is important to make this distinction. Without an understanding of why Jesus died, human beings will not be sensitive to the concept of sin and appraise the truth of their human nature.



You might believe that human nature is innately good.

You may not have any guilt, shame or remorse for bad thoughts and actions.

You may not see a need to repent.

De-emphasizing His death and resurrection denies the deity of Jesus Christ and the basis of His absolute moral standard; you may be unaware of His work of atonement.

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The Law of Moses

Through the Law of Moses (i.e. Ten Commandments, etc.), God taught Moses and the nation of Israel what sin was.

Included in the Law, God taught how to reconcile both intentional (i.e. Lev 1:1-17) and unintentional sins (Lev 4:1-35).

The atonement of Jesus Christ reflects the prescribed method of appeasing God and provides a deeper understanding of Jesus' last words. Without appreciating the complex nature of atonement, one will not recognize the true nature and beauty of God's grace.



The Law of Moses (continues)

Even so, many questions are still debated today such as:

Did Jesus die to bear the sin of the world or to set an example for human beings to follow?

Was the sacrifice of Jesus substitutionary or representative?

Did Jesus die for only a few or did He die for all of mankind?

One approach to understanding the many dimensions of atonement is through the concept of redemption...

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Dimensions of Atonement

Redemption

Redemption is very similar in meaning to atonement, and like atonement, it is a complex word to define. Throughout the New Testament, 8 Greek terms are used to provide subtle but different nuances to the term redemption, from which two meanings emerge.

1. Ransom redemption

This conveys the sense that there was a payment for a price.

This meaning takes an *objective perspective*, because it addresses God's judicial and legal requirements.

2. Liberation redemption

This conveys the sense that there was an emancipation of an individual.

This meaning takes a *subjective perspective*, because it affects God's judicial consequences of human beings.

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Ransom Redemption

In the New Testament, Jesus introduces the idea that His redemption involves a ransom (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45); a price is paid for one's freedom. These examples illustrate this idea:

just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom (**Greek: lutron**) for many (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45).

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought (**Greek: agorazō**) them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves (2 Pet 2:1).

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased (Greek: agorazō) for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation (Rev 5:9).



Ransom Redemption (continues)

This payment required to release a human being from punishment or slavery can find its basis in the Old Testament.

1. Ransom of the Firstborn

During the Exodus, God instructs the nation of Israel to consecrate their firstborn sons and animals when they enter the Promised Land (Ex 13:1-16; Num 18:15-17). These firstborns were obligated to God, because they, having marked their doorposts with the blood of a lamb, were protected from Egypt's tenth plague.

Thereafter, God placed a special claim on the Hebrews' first born male son. Presented as God's property to the temple when one month old, the first born son was redeemed by the father who paid the priest a redemption price (Num 18:15-16). This ransom served as a reminder of deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

2. Atonement Money

Taking a census for purposes of taxation or preparation for war is a punishable offense by God. When it occurs, each person counted had to be covered or atoned for with atonement money (Ex 30:11-16; 38:26; Num 3:47; 31:44-54).

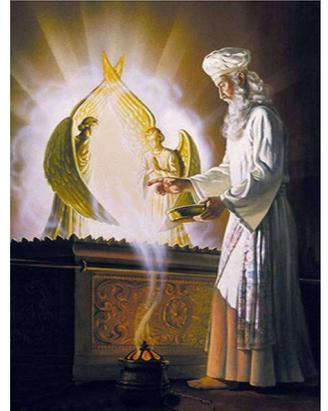
Consistent with principles of "ransom of the firstborn" and "atonement money", the crucifixion of Jesus Christ paid the redemption price to God for the forfeited lives of humanity. Because this ransom involves paid a payment directly to God to meet a legal requirement, this aspect of redemption is understood in the objective sense, which allows the offer of salvation to be available for all.

Exploring this further takes us back to the Day of Atonement prescribed in the Law of Moses...
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Day of Atonement

Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest enters the inner sanctuary of the temple to make a sacrifice for the sins of the entire nation of Israel. The sacrificial ritual required two male goats that were physically perfect in age and condition. Sacrificed as the sin offering, one goat's blood and flesh were offered as a substitute payment of the nation's sin. On the head of the surviving goat (scapegoat), the high priest confessed all of the nation's sins and released to the wild to signify that sin left the Hebrew nation (Lev 16:1-34).



The Old Testament sacrificial system clearly used animal sacrifices as a substitute for the atonement of human beings (Lev 17:11). Implicit in this is the recognition of God's judicial penalty for sin is death.

In his prophecy of the Messiah, the Old Testament prophet Isaiah indicates the significance of the Messiah's sacrifice within the context of the Levitical sacrificial laws (Isaiah 53:1-12).

The Servant's sacrifice was for iniquity (Isa 53:5, 6, 11), transgression (Isa 53:5, 8) and sin (Isa 53:12).

The Servant's offering was a guilt offering (Isa 53:10).

The death of the Servant was substitutionary in nature, and it was in substitute for human beings (Isa 53:5, 11, 12).

This idea of substitution was based on God's prescribed method for restoring a relationship with Him that was broken by intentional or unintentional sin. This symbolism of conferring sin on to the substitute finds its basis in the Day of Atonement.

How Salvation Became Available: Dimensions of Atonement

Day of Atonement (continues)

Note carefully that when the High Priest made this sacrifice for the whole nation of Israel, the payment was being made to God regardless of whether individuals of the nation were Believers or not.

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Substitution

The New Testament authors certainly understood the crucifixion of Christ within the context of the Old Testament sacrificial system: the sacrifice of an unblemished animal takes the place of the sinner, and its blood makes atonement.

Jesus was the unblemished animal; He was sinless (2 Cor 5:21, 1 Pet 2:22-24; 3:18).

Jesus' substitutionary death accomplished two purposes:

For God, the judicial price for sin was paid in full.

Standing in place of human beings, Jesus represented mankind and bore the total penalty of our sins.

For man, Jesus' substitutionary death cleansed us of our sins and removed the cause of God's wrath.

Jesus' sacrifice was individually for each one of us!

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Expiation / Propitiation

"Propitiation" and "expiation" are two vitally important functions that are accomplished by Jesus' substitutionary sacrifice. These terms are translated from the Greek nouns "hilastērion" and "hilasmos."

Expiation is directed towards God. It means "to make amends" or "to atone for", and it implies the removal or cleansing of sin. It can also be seen as "the removal of the reasons for punishment".

Propitiation is directed towards man. It means "to make favorable", and it refers to averting God's wrath against sinners. It is the act that appeased the total and full wrath of God's judgment for the sins of human beings.

It is important to understand the Greek term "hilastērion," because it was used several times to translate the Hebrew term "kapporet," which specified the lid of the Ark of the Covenant. The association of expiation and propitiation with the lid of the Ark of the Covenant connects the Mosaic Covenant with the New Covenant.

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The Mercy Seat (Means for Propitiation)

The Hebrew term "kapporet" (Greek: "hilastērion") has been translated as "mercy seat;" however, a more accurate translation would be "means of propitiation" or "place of propitiation".

The "place of propitiation" was the lid of the Ark of the Covenant, a slab of pure gold (approximately 45 inches wide x 27 inches long). This was the throne of God where God sat when He communicated with Moses.



The Mercy Seat (Means for Propitiation) (continues)

When the high priest enters the Holy of Holies, once a year on the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for sin (Leviticus 16:1-34), he sacrifices a young bull to atone for himself and his family and one unblemished male goat for the nation of Israel.

The blood of the sacrificed bull and goat was sprinkled on the place of propitiation. This represented both the covering of sin (expiation) and the mercy of God to forgive sin (propitiation). This may be why the translation for "kapporet" ultimately became "mercy seat".

Jesus' sacrifice was symbolically seen to have elements of the Day of Atonement in the process of restoring a relationship with God.

Just like the blood of the sacrificed unblemished goat was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat, Jesus provided the blood for the place of propitiation (Rom 3:25; Heb 9:12-14).

Just like the Mercy Seat received the blood to appease God, Jesus was the place of propitiation (1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10)

Just like the High Priest who alone enters the Holy of Holies and the presence of God with the blood of the goat he sacrificed, Jesus became the High Priest and mediator of the New Covenant (Heb 9:15, 24-26).

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ was more than simply an "expiation", and it was more than simply a "propitiation." When Jesus speaks of fulfilling the Law in Matthew 5:17, He meant it in a literal sense.

Jesus is the High Priest who provides His own blood for the expiation of sins of human beings.

Jesus is the High Priest who provides the place of propitiation for human beings and satisfied the judgment of God.

The Mosaic legislation clearly was concerned about both sin and justice and in Jesus Christ the Mosaic Law was truly fulfilled.

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Liberation Redemption

While the apostles clearly understood the ransom perspective of redemption, they also preached its consequences as a liberation from God's judgment of sin (Gal 3:13). These examples illustrate this idea:

being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption (**Greek: apolutrōsis**) which is in Christ Jesus; (Rom 3:24)

In Him we have redemption (**Greek: apolutrōsis**) through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace (Eph 1:7)

Christ redeemed (**Greek: exagorazō**) us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"— (Gal 3:13)

For many Gentile Believers, familiar with the Greco-Roman slave market, they understood redemption as liberation from slavery.



How Salvation Became Available: Dimensions of Atonement

Liberation Redemption (continues)

The imagery of liberation from slavery provides a very personal context to redemption. Seeing that a huge ransom is being paid by God's only Son provides some context to the cost and the depth of grace being bestowed.

For Jewish Believers, liberation redemption was seen through the symbolism of Passover.

Note carefully that different Greek terms refer to the release or emancipation of a prisoner, and they describe the subjective aspects of redemption; it is the consequence for human beings when God's judicial requirements are met, and **this nuance of meaning is used in the limited exclusive sense namely to Believers of God.**

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Passover

The night before the Exodus, God instructs the Hebrews to sacrifice a year old male lamb or goat without any blemishes (Ex 12:5) and use its blood as protection against God's judgment and final plague against Pharaoh (Ex 12:13).

This feast would become a lasting memorial (Exodus 12:14), celebrated annually (Lev 23:4-6) and testament of the historical reality of God (Ex 20:2; Deut 5:6).

When the apostles associate Jesus as the paschal lamb (Passover lamb), Jesus' sacrifice takes on special significance.

Paul calls "For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed" (1 Cor 5:7).

Peter sees Jesus as having the characteristics of the paschal lamb with an emphasis on His blood: unblemished and spotless (1 Pet 1:19).

John sees Jesus as the "Lamb standing, as if slain" (Rev 5:6).

By divine appointment (Acts 2:23), the time of Jesus' crucifixion took place during the sacrifice of the Passover lamb (John 13:1; 18:28; 19:14-18).

John the Baptist prophetically sees Jesus as the link between Passover and the Day of Atonement, the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!" (John 1:29).

For the Jew, as Passover heralded freedom from slavery in Egypt, the death of Christ heralded freedom from slavery to sin (Rom 8:2).

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Reconciliation

The real outcome to atonement is reconciliation.

It is more than a restoration of a relationship.

It is the restoration of a divine relationship with the consequence of eternal life for one's soul (Rom 5:10; 11:15).

And if there is a true and genuine reconciliation of one with God, true and genuine reconciliation between human beings can occur (Eph 2:16).



How Salvation Became Available: Dimensions of Atonement

Reconciliation (continues)

The atonement of Jesus Christ is so complete that Believers are absolutely reconciled with God, and He gives former offenders the privilege of representing Him (2 Cor 5:18-20).

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Triumph

There is another consequence of atonement that is not widely known.

Your personal record of sin is gone!

The Bible speaks of a "certificate of debt" which is a list of sins that is used in condemning you before God by fallen angels (Col 2:13-15). With Jesus' crucifixion, this certificate of debt is paid in full!

In canceling this debt, fallen angels are disarmed and cannot impeach you!

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Conclusion: the Basis of Salvation

With an understanding of atonement, the meaning of John 3:16 takes on special significance.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

God gave His Son to do all of the work that provides the means for a sinner to reconcile himself to God.

Imagine giving your only son to die for the sins of an antagonistic stranger so that this stranger can enter your home, be adopted as your son and be a representative of you!!



While Jesus' work is atonement, the work of God is that you believe in Him whom He has sent. (John 6:29)

And while Believers see eternal life as a personal benefit, Jesus defines what eternal life is.

"This is eternal life, that they [Believers] may know You, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3)

These three verses form the basis that will help you understand the divine actions that lead you to initial salvation: election, draw, call and predestine.

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Divine Actions

Election - A Definition

Throughout the Bible, God is seen in choosing places (i.e. Deut 6:6; 1 Kings 11:13, 32), people (i.e. Deut 4:37; Acts 13:17) and individuals (i.e. 1 Sam 9:15-17) and all for specific purposes.

Election is an act of God in which He chooses people for the purpose of executing His divine plan of recovering mankind and re-establishing His kingdom on His schedule.

A good example can be seen with non-Believers:

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 2:23)



Election is an act of His sovereign will determined before Creation (Eph 1:4), and in accordance to His time (Acts 2:23; 13:48; 1 Pet 1:2).

Intended for God's purposes, divine election does not cause salvation.

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God Chose to be God to Abraham and his Descendants

The earliest record of God choosing something involving a human being is found in the covenant that God makes with Abraham. This unilateral unconditional covenant that God makes with Abraham is of great significance. Here the omnipotent God of the universe has chosen to commit Himself to be God to Abraham and his descendants, because of Abraham's faith in Him:



"I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations as an everlasting covenant, **to be God to you and to your**

descendants after you. And I will give to you and to your descendants after you the land where you live as a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and **I will be their God**" (Gen 17:7-8).

In choosing to be God to Abraham's descendants, God makes the conditional Mosaic covenant with the children of Israel to teach them how to be a people of God – to learn what sin is and how to atone for it. If He is to be God to Abraham's descendants, His own possession among all the peoples, then the children of Israel must be a sanctified people, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation in God's holy land (Ex 19:4-6).

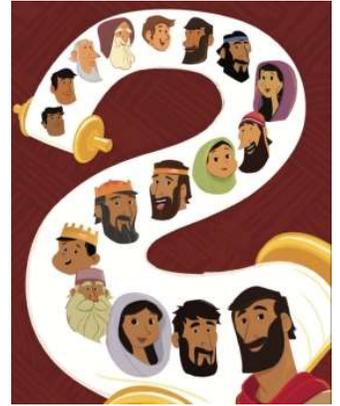
When speaking to Gentiles, the apostle Paul alludes to the covenant God made to be God to Abraham and his descendants:

Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the people of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of the promise, **having no hope and without God** in the world. (Eph 2:12)

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Examples of Election: Mediators of the Covenant

While Abraham had many descendants, God chose Jacob (Rom 9:11-13; Mal 1:2-5) as the line through which the covenant would be passed. The nation of Israel arises from Jacob (Gen 35:1-15), and God identifies Himself as the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob (Ex 3:15).



Here for the first time, God chooses between two siblings of the same Patriarch (Rom 9:10-13).

In loving commitment to His covenant promises to Abraham, God chooses who will fulfill His promises and carry out His covenant plan. As Paul, the former teacher of the Law, defines who the "children of the promise" are to the church of Rome, he makes clear that God's sovereign choice of instruments of the covenant is based on love for the one who has faith in Him:

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "through Isaac your descendants shall be named." That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come, and Sarah will have a son." And not only that, but there was also Rebekah, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger." Just as it is written: "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated" (Rom 9:6-13).

Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and Jesus are examples of principal faithful individuals, whom God loved, who were all chosen to mediate God's covenant promises.

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Examples of Election: Workers of God

With the inauguration of the New Covenant, God's covenant work turned to causing human beings to believe in His Son Jesus Christ:

Therefore they said to Him, "What are we to do, so that we may accomplish the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent" (John 6:28-29).

When one knows Jesus Christ, one meets and knows his personal God (John 14:7-11).

Jesus speaks of choosing His disciples including Judas Iscariot to fulfill His Father's plan:

I am not speaking about all of you. I know the ones whom I have chosen; but this is happening so that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.' From now on I am telling you before it happens, so that when it does happen, you may believe that I am He. Truly, truly I say to you, the one who receives anyone I send, receives Me; and the one who receives Me receives Him who sent Me." (John 13:18-20)



After the departure of Judas, Jesus reveals the purpose of choosing the disciples; they were chosen and appointed for fruitful service:

You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you (John 15:16).

Examples of Election: Workers of God (continues)

Jesus chooses Saul (who would be renamed Paul) to be His apostle to the Gentiles:

But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; (Acts 9:15)

Correspondingly to Judas Iscariot, the apostle Peter indicates that God's choice of human beings includes non-Believers to carry out His covenant work:

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you handed over and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, but put to death the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses. And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all. And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers also did. But the things which God previously announced by the mouths of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, **He has fulfilled in this way** (Acts 3:13-18).

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The Elect

When God speaks of people that He calls His own possession (Ex 19:5-6; 2 Chron 7:14), the people He has chosen to be their God, they are also known as the "elect" (Luke 18:7).

God's choice of a person may not mean that a person is of the elect; however, if of the elect, that person listened and was obedient to God (Ex 19:5-6).



An example of this is seen when the apostle Peter is speaking of people being given a choice to believe or not, and those who chose to believe are designated as "a chosen race":

For this is contained in Scripture:

"Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone,
And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed."

This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve,

"The stone which the builders rejected,
This became the very corner stone," and,
"A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense";

for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; (1 Peter 2:6-9)

How does an invisible God make known His desire for people whom He can call His own?

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God Draws

The theological meaning of "draw" is in the figurative sense. It means "to attract by the expression of loyal love or covenant loyalty." It is not synonymous with salvation.

Before Jesus, God drew men by demonstrating His love and lovingkindness.

The reality of the Abrahamic Covenant was perpetuated by God's faithful commitment to it through blessings (i.e. Jews are the only small ethnic group that can trace its roots back to its beginning, etc.) and miracles (i.e. the Exodus, etc.). This is further evidenced by the supreme elaboration of the unilateral and unconditional Abrahamic Covenant with the New Covenant and with the foreknowledge of Israel's failure to uphold their commitment to the Law of Moses (Jer 31:31-33).



Coming to faith in God was available to all, because Gentile Believers could become Jews living under the Law of Moses (Num 15:13-16; Ruth 1:15-17). Jesus corroborates the fact that a "Jew" was not a tribal group within the ethnic race of Hebrews, but instead a genuine Believer of God (John 8:31-47; Rev 2:9; 3:9).

When Jesus arrived on earth, He said, "no one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day (John 6:44).

This statement was directed exclusively towards disbelieving Jews and in particular Jewish religious authorities; it was not a statement to all non-Believers. Those who knew and obeyed God's word (covenant keeping Believers under the Law of Moses) listened to angels or the Holy Spirit who showed them who the Messiah was (i.e. the one of virgin birth divinely named Jesus ["God is salvation"] in fulfillment of the prophetic name Immanuel ["God with us"] Matt 1:21-23; Is 7:10-14).

Only genuine believing Jews living under the Law recognized that Jesus was the Messiah, because He fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies that spoke of Him (John 5:37-47).

Only genuine believing Jews living under the Law recognized that Jesus was the Messiah, because He did miracles that they knew the only living God could do (John 5:36).

Only genuine believing Jews living under the Law would believe the testimony of John the Baptist who personally saw and listened to God indicating who His Son was (John 5:33-35).

Disbelieving Jews could not recognize any of the works of God, because the means of God's drawing, faithful knowledge of God's word, identified who the Messiah was, which was the stumbling block for the Jews (John 6:45).

In contrast, Gentiles who came to faith in Jesus as the Messiah, did so by simply believing in His claim of being the Messiah (John 4:7-54). Jews who initially did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, like the Pharisee Nicodemus (John 3:1-2), also came to faith by believing in Jesus' claim of Messiah (John 3:9-21).

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Jesus Draws

When Jesus leaves earth, He said, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself" (John 12:32).

Jesus' use of the term "draw" is with the same figurative sense and means "to attract by the expression of loyal love."

Jesus Draws (continues)

Expressing His love for His Father through His unwavering obedience to His Father, Jesus was crucified (John 12:44-50; John 14:30-31). Through His resurrection, Jesus established Himself beyond any doubt that He was indeed the Messiah (John 20:24-29). This historical event is the means of drawing all to Him in order that the gospel can be shared.

But how effective one is as a messenger of the gospel of Jesus Christ is dependent on a Believer's agape love. Although Believers are introduced to agape love because God first loved us (1 John 4:19), the public testimony of God's love depends on a Believer's life (John 13:34-35; Gal 2:20).

Agape love is the love of the Father who desires that His children are with Him forever.

Agape love is the love of the Son who knows He's the only means that others will know of His Father's love for them.

Agape love is the love of God's children who know that everyone can be adopted by the Father who accepts them as they are. It is selfless and encourages others to grow closer to the Father.

Agape love is the divine love of God's family. **How effective one is as a messenger of the gospel depends on how well one reflects the reality that Jesus Christ is the Messiah.**

This is God's means of leading one to repentance (Rom 2:4).

As Jesus draws, He also calls. These two divine actions can lead one to salvation.

www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/9system_salvation/draw2.aspx

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Call - A Definition

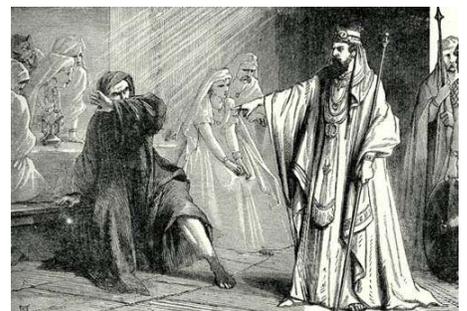
The theological meaning of "call" is a privileged invitation to be His people, to holiness or to be a holy person. It can be understood as an indirect invitation into the kingdom of God.

This definition can be seen in the Parable of the Wedding Banquet (Matt 22:1-14) where Jesus uses the Greek verb for call, "kaleō," with a meaning of "invite" five times.

People, regardless of qualification, were invited as guests to the wedding banquet of the king's son.

Those who came had to have the proper wedding garments (Isa 61:10).

Without one, the guest was thrown out "into the outer darkness" where "there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."



The parable ends with "many are called, but few are chosen" which indicates that those "called" are not necessarily "chosen." The invited have the choice to come freely or not as holy people; but, if they come, they must put on the proper clothing symbolic of faith in Jesus. Those who believe are of the "elect;" of all the peoples of the world, God chooses to be God to those who have the faith of Abraham (Gen 17:7).

In the above parable and two others (Parable of the Guests: Luke 14:7-10, 12-13 and the Parable of Great Banquet: Luke 14:16-17, 24), there is a suggestion that Jesus intended the invitation as a privilege and command, because with the invitation to be one of God's people, a holy person, there are consequences for refusing.

www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/9system_salvation/call1.aspx

How is One Called?

The apostle Paul sees the call of God as the gospel presented by human beings verbally or through the written word of the Bible (2 Thess 2:14-15).

For example, Jesus began His ministry by announcing the coming Kingdom of God, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15; Matt 3:2; 4:17).

Addressed as "called ones" (Rom 1:6; 8:28; 1 Cor 1:24) or "saints" which means "holy ones" (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2), both believing Jews and Gentiles form a "royal priesthood," a "holy nation" and a "people of God" (1 Pet 2:9-10) who serve as messengers of divine calling to the world (Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18) mediated through the gospel.



Paul's use of the "kaleo" word group is with the same meaning as its use in the Old Testament and Jesus of the New Testament. In Paul's ministry, God calls individuals to be His people but to be of the elect, one must believe in the gospel. In understanding that salvation is the means by which the call of each individual to be holy is fulfilled, Paul emphasizes the vital importance of sharing the gospel.

www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/9system_salvation/call2.aspx

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What if One Doesn't Receive the Call?

Regardless of whether or not one receives a personal call to holiness, each of us is innately aware of the existence of God (Rom 1:19-23).

For example, Barnabas and Paul speak of Creation, weather and bountiful harvests testifying to God's existence (Acts 14:15-17), and human history shows that all early cultures had some form of theism albeit involving multiple deities.

In another example, all human beings, at some point in life, will consider at least one of these existential questions:

How was I created?

Why was I created?

How did I become moral? (How did morality originate?)

What happens when I die?



Whether it is natural phenomenon or about one's origin, meaning, morality or end, the objective pursuit of the answers to these questions will lead one to God. Jesus' parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Costly Pearl touches on this very issue of the seeking man.

Peter makes clear, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9).

God welcomes any who fears Him and does what is right (Acts 10:23-35).

www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/9system_salvation/call3.aspx

Predestine

The Greek verb "prohorizō" means "decide upon beforehand." Instead of "predestine," a more accurate translation would be "predetermine" or "pre-appoint."

It is a term that describes the certainty of God's sequence of choice, timing and outcome whether it pertains to people, nations, places or events.

It is a term attesting to God's sovereignty and foreknowledge; it is a divine action that results from omniscience.

The "prohorizō" seen in the prayer of the apostles (Acts 4:28) reflects the sermon given earlier by Peter (Acts 2:23-24). It shows that God had worked out His eternal plan for salvation through Jesus Christ by means of His absolute foreknowledge of all human factors involved with the timing and accomplishment of the crucifixion (i.e. Judas, Jewish religious leaders, Herod, Pontius Pilate, Roman soldiers, the mob, etc.) at a particular time on a particular day and with the fulfillment of prophecy.

This can be diagrammed as follows (bold text / shading indicates God's attribute / action):

Omniscience ➤ **Election** of people (i.e. Judas, Herod, Pontius Pilate, etc), of nation (i.e. Israel), of location (i.e. Jerusalem) for His predetermined plan ➤ Crucifixion

Predetermine

www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/9system_salvation/predestine1.aspx

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How Do These All Relate to People?

Election

This can be diagrammed as follows (bold text / shading indicates God's attribute / action):

Omniscience ➤ **Elect** ➤ **Draw** ➤ **Call** ➤ God's Plan
Predetermine (predestine)

The divine process begins with **election** which is the act of God where He chooses people for the purpose of executing His divine plan of recovering mankind and re-establishing His kingdom on His schedule.

With regard to God's plan in fulfilling His promises to Abraham, God foreknows how each person will respond to various circumstances.

With regard to one's salvation, God evaluates the heart of a person and foreknows whether or not they will have a love for Him. Just like Jacob and Esau, through God's foreknowledge of who will choose Him and obey before one is born, God already chose to be God to that person and actively becomes God to that person when one comes to faith (Eph 1:3-6).

www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/9system_salvation/sequence1.aspx

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Draw

This can be diagrammed as follows (bold text / shading indicates God's attribute / action):

Omniscience ➤ **Elect** ➤ **Draw** ➤ **Call** ➤ God's Plan
Predetermine (predestine)

Salvation from the Penalty of Sin: How Do These All Relate to People?

Draw (continues)

Draw, in the figurative sense, is God's action of attracting human beings through His love demonstrated by Jesus' crucifixion and atonement (John 12:32). To esteem such love for an insignificant being as man, God sought to elicit from human beings an introspection of moral values that would lead to repentance (Rom 2:4).

Just as God sought to draw the nation of Israel with His loyal love (covenant loyalty) through world events like the Exodus, He seeks to draw the world through the provision of His Son for the sin offering of the world (John 3:16; Gen 12:3; 22:18).

The relationship between drawing and faith can be seen in Old Testament Believers. Those who were drawn to God's covenant loyalty (lovingkindness) came to faith and became His people. As God's possession, they were given over to His Son Jesus Christ. And only those Old Testament Believers who had a genuine faith in God knew and recognized that Jesus was the Messiah (John 6:37-47).

The relationship between drawing and faith can be seen in New Testament Believers. Demonstrating His love for His Father and mankind, Jesus Christ's ultimate sacrifice of atonement and resurrection as God's only Son draws people to faith (John 12:33). After the crucifixion, Christians are more explicitly identified as "belonging to Christ."

Consistently throughout the Bible, it is agape love that draws:

For God so loved (agapaō) the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:16-18)

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)
www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/9system_salvation/sequence2.aspx

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Call

This can be diagrammed as follows (bold text / shading indicates God's attribute / action):

Omniscience > **Elect** > **Draw** > **Call** > God's Plan
Predetermine (predestine)

Jesus uses the term **call** in the context of a privileged invitation to be God's holy people and to the kingdom of God.

The call comes in the form of the gospel being heard or read (Heb 3:7-15). And people can respond either with obedience or disobedience.

In the context of God's plan of fulfilling His promises to Abraham, both God and Jesus use the term **call** to summon Believers to their role in executing God's plan.

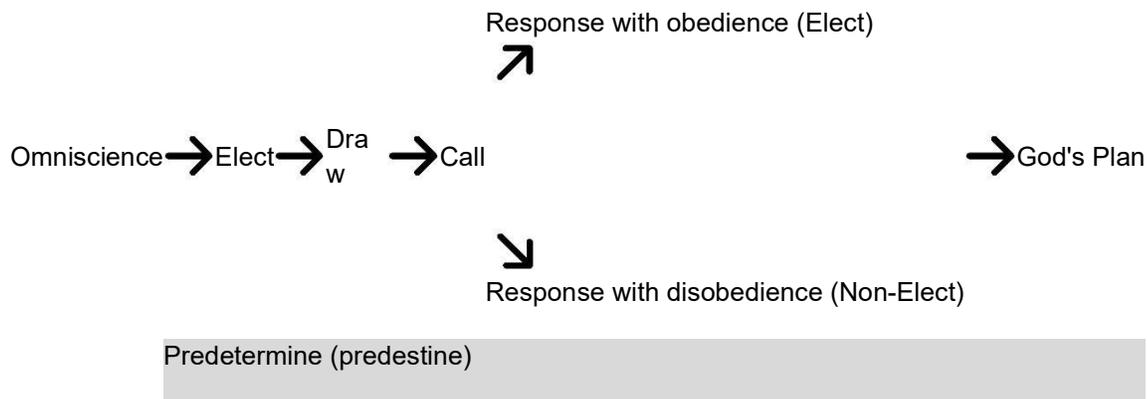
For those who respond with obedience, Paul addresses the call to Believers in the context of their role and responsibility as a holy people. Paul sees a historical purpose for the elect.

For those who respond with disobedience, Paul sees a historical purpose for the non-elect.

www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/9system_salvation/sequence3.aspx

Salvation from the Penalty of Sin: How Do These All Relate to People?

Responses to the Call



Obedient to the Call (the Elect)

Those who are obedient to the call are those who respond positively to the gospel and have faith in Jesus Christ. Believers are the "elect" and are adopted as sons of God (Rom 8:14-17; Gal 3:26).

Historical purpose of Jewish Believers:

As part of the promised blessing to the Gentile Abraham, the nation of Israel was the object of God's created election. Israel was not a nation selectively chosen from other nations; it represented God's "firstborn" (Ex 4:22-23) through which all nations would be blessed culminating in the birth of Jesus Christ, the Messiah High Priest.

Historical purpose of Gentile Believers:

Gentile Believers are intended to make non-believing Jews jealous for Jesus Christ (Rom 11:11).

Because they were given the Torah, which can refer to the Pentateuch or whole Old Testament, Jews thought they had a higher standing before God; no pagan could achieve salvation through the Torah without becoming a Jew first. But the Jews did not realize the limitations of the Law for atonement; salvation through faith in Jesus Christ provided complete and assured atonement not by birthright or works.

By living a life in recognition of salvation by grace, Gentile Believers will make disbelieving Jews desirous of salvation through the Messiah. The fact that there were Gentile Believers was proof of the sufficiency of God's grace.

Together, both Jewish and Gentile Believers, form a royal priesthood, a holy nation and a people of God (1 Pet 2:9-10)!!

Disobedient to the Call (the non-Elect)

Those who are disobedient to the call are those who have no faith in Jesus Christ.

Historical purpose of non-Believers:

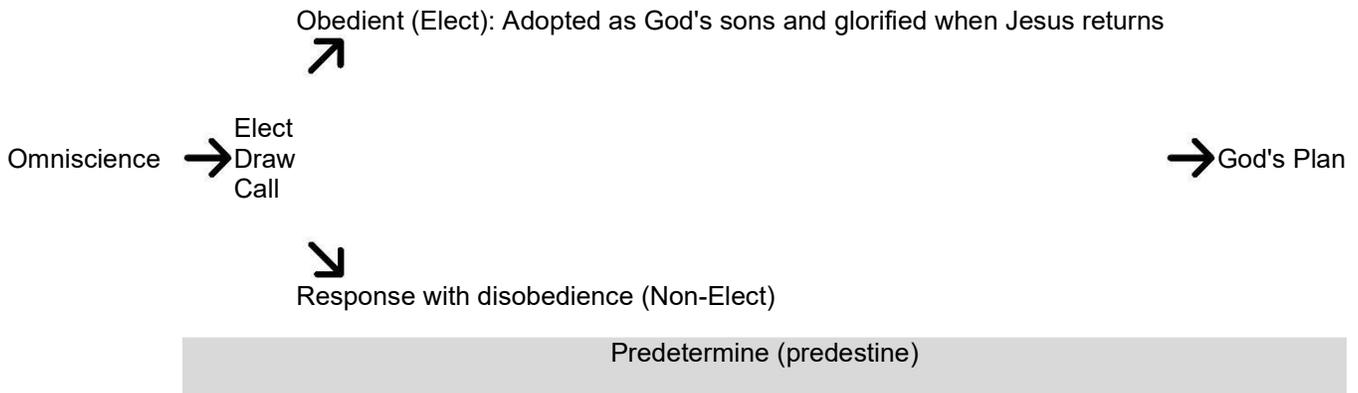
Non-Believers are intended to glorify God (Rom 9:17; John 6:70-71).

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Salvation from the Penalty of Sin: How Do These All Relate to People?

Pre-Appointing Believers

Fulfilling God's plan of recovering mankind and re-establishing His kingdom.



Predestine describes the certainty of God's sequence of election, timing and outcome. Just as God has a predetermined plan for events, He has a **predetermined plan for Believers**. For example, when Paul says:

For those whom He **foreknew**, He also **predestined** to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He **predestined**, He also **called**; and these whom He **called**, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (Rom 8:29-30)

Paul informs us that God foreknows who will respond positively to His call to obedience.

Paul knows of God's promise to Abraham: of all the peoples of the earth, God chooses to be God to those who chose to have faith in Him. (Gen 17:7)

Paul assures us that those with the faith of Abraham are determined beforehand to become like His Son Jesus, entitled to all the privileges and inheritance of a son. (Eph 1:5-11)

Those who chose to disobey and remain unholy are predestined to be removed from the presence of the holy God. (Rev 21:1-8)

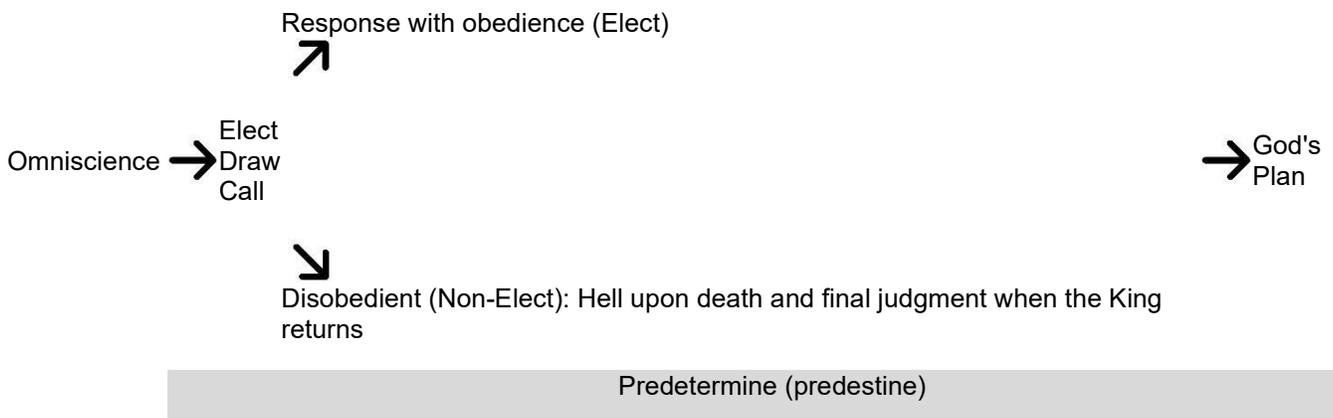
Pre-appointed to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, Believers were called to be His holy people to serve with a purpose, justified and glorified; it is God's predetermined plan of sanctification from start to finish.

www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/9system_salvation/sequence5.aspx

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Pre-Appointing Non-Believers

Fulfilling God's plan of recovering mankind and re-establishing His kingdom.



Salvation from the Penalty of Sin: How Do These All Relate to People?

Pre-Appointing Non-Believers (continues)

Predestine describes the certainty of God's sequence of election, timing and outcome. Just as God has a predetermined plan for events, He has a predetermined plan for Non-Believers.

No better of an example than the nation of Israel itself.

As its Creator, God foreknew the nation and foresaw that Israel would fail to fulfill His purpose for them, reject the Messiah and be replaced by another people (Rom 9:6 - 10:13).

Based on this foreknowledge, God provided prophets to warn the nation of Israel of their lack of faith and bring them back into their covenant relationship (Rom 10:16-21; Deut 32:21; Isa 53:1; 65:1-2).

With omniscience, the nation's failure was anticipated in God's plan so that God's word would not be discredited (Rom 9:6).

In their rejection of Jesus, the disbelieving Jews set the stage for His crucifixion and atonement in Jerusalem on the Day of Preparation, which would fulfill the Mosaic Covenant.

Despite the nation of Israel's rejection of Jesus, God's plan continued to be fulfilled: there was a remnant of true Jewish Believers (Rom 11:4-10), Gentiles were grafted into the root of Abraham (Rom 11:11-24) and the nation will be restored in the end (Rom 11:23-32).

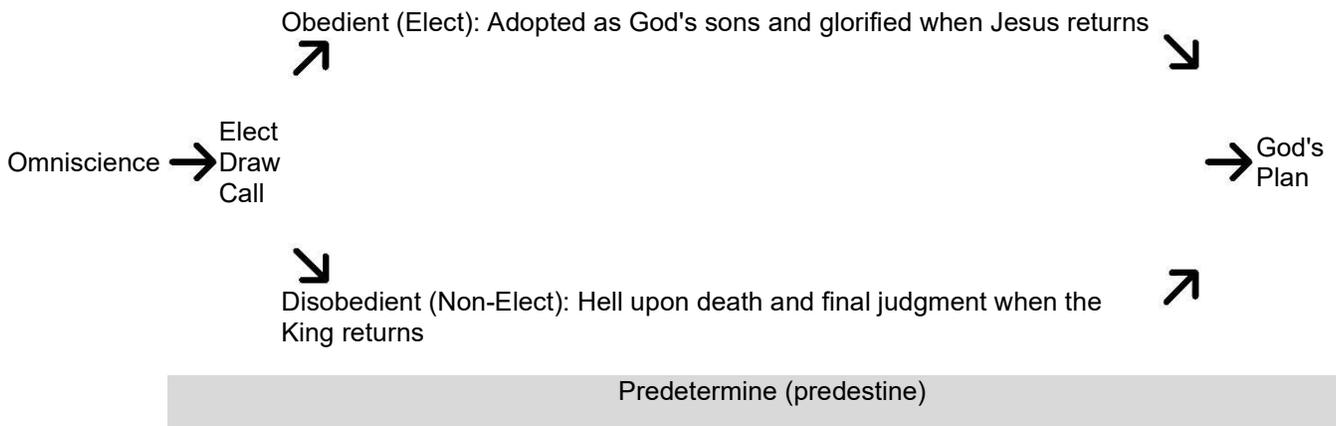
And in the process of recovering mankind and re-establishing the kingdom of God, God is glorified (John 17:1-5).

www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/9system_salvation/sequence6.aspx

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Pre-Appointing Everyone

Fulfilling God's plan of recovering mankind and re-establishing His kingdom.



Predestine describes the certainty of God's sequence of election, timing and outcome.

When God elects, draws and calls, He sets into motion His plan for the recovery of mankind and the re-establishment of His kingdom at a specific time and at a specific place.

Based on what He foreknows, God pre-appoints the roles for each Believer and non-Believer, and how each will play according to His plan.

And while He knows who will be His people, He has a predetermined plan of sanctification for Believers and a plan of judgment for the disobedient who violate His standard of holiness.

Salvation from the Penalty of Sin: How Do These All Relate to People?

Pre-Appointing Everyone (continues)

For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment (John 5:26-29).

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Predestine and Free Will

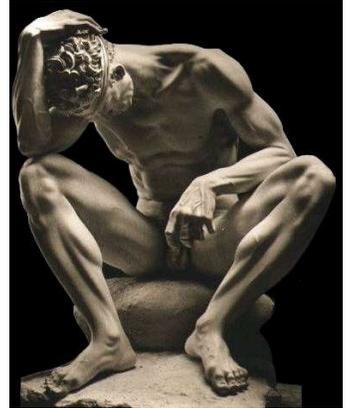
The idea that God foreknows and predestines / predetermines / pre-appoints a person may imply that a person doesn't have complete freedom in making choices.

What exactly is the relationship between God's sovereign will and man's free will? Can human beings act freely or are our lives predetermined and inevitable?

While the Bible does not explicitly say, the apostles saw no conflict with the apparent tension.

In the context of God's definition of faith (Ex 19:4-6), Paul saw as a matter of obedience.

Among those who debate this tension, there is little dispute that the Bible has numerous verses attesting to the sovereignty of God and that nothing can prevent the fulfillment of His predetermined plans (2 Kings 19:25; Job 42:2; Ps 115:3; 135:6; Dan 4:35). What is debated is how God's sovereign plans are carried out with human beings.



Does God dictate every thought and action of a human being?

This view holds that God predetermines and human beings do not have free will.

Or does God program human beings to think they have free will?

This view holds that God predetermines and human beings, from their perspective, have free will.

Or does God plan with the foreknowledge of how each human being will use his freedom?

This view holds that God fully predetermines and human beings have complete free will.

While theologians fiercely debate, there isn't any clear biblical data that provides a clear understanding. One can only surmise what the biblical evidence suggests.

In the Old Testament, Joseph's brothers intended evil upon him; however, God's plan intended it for good (Gen 50:20). A similar example is seen in the New Testament where God's predetermined plan included the actions of "wicked men" (Acts 2:23).

When the prophet Samuel is seeking to anoint the next king, God tells him, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God does not see as man sees, since man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam 16:7). On that basis, God chose David to be the shepherd of His people (2 Sam 5:2), because he was seen as "a man after My heart, who will do all My will" (Acts 13:22).

In Romans 9:10, Paul quotes Malachi 1:2-3 to illustrate the sovereignty of God's choice of Jacob over Esau before they were born. Without any regard for achievement, there was something that God foreknew about each that caused Him to love one and hate the other.

Salvation from the Penalty of Sin: How Do These All Relate to People?

Predestine and Free Will (continues)

In Acts 1:23-26, Barsabbas and Matthias are submitted to replace Judas Iscariot. Just before lots are drawn (Prov 16:33), the apostles prayed, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen..."

There are a few instances where one is chosen for a purpose before they were born such as Jeremiah (Jer 1:5), John the Baptist (Luke 1:15-17) and Paul (Gal 1:15). Paul's election is particularly striking as the accomplishments of his prior life as Saul was violently antagonistic towards Christians (Acts 7:58; 8:1-3; 22:3-5), and this experience motivated him to serve Christ all the more (1 Cor 15:10; Acts 9:4-16).

The question of whether a human being has complete and autonomous free will may never be conclusively answered in our lifetime. However, just as we are held responsible for our actions (1 Sam 13:13-14), we are accountable to the exhortation of faith. And God's choices do not seem arbitrary and are seemingly based on the foreknowledge of a person...

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Responding to the Call

What is Faith?

1 Corinthians 13:2 paints a picture that faith imparts power.

Romans 12:3-6 provides a sense that faith is proportional and can vary among individuals.

1 Corinthians 12:9 suggests that faith is a gift and that you cannot do anything about it.

What exactly does "faith" mean?

Is it blind or a leap?

Do I have enough?

Is it hope in the unknown future?

Or is it wishful thinking?



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Faith and the Old Testament

The biblical concept of faith can be seen in its earliest form in the Old Testament where a variety of Hebrew terms provide a rich and complex definition.

Two root verbs form the basis of the concept of faith.

1. **'Āman** conveys the sense of "reliability, stability" and "firmness."

The hiphil verb stem of 'āman conveys the meaning "to be certain, sure" or "to be assured. This perspective indicates that "faith" has a basis on a historical event; it is founded on truth certain of a real living God and the absolute reality of His words.



Faith and the Old Testament (continues)

The niph'al verb stem conveys the meaning "to be true, reliable or faithful" and can be applied to both God and men. This perspective indicates that "faith" acquires a meaning of "to be entrusted with."

2. **Bāṭaḥ** means "to trust, rely upon" or "to put confidence in".

"Bāṭaḥ" as a verb, in its qal or hiphil verb form, expresses the sense of well-being and security which results from having something or someone in whom to place confidence. It is the action of believing in something so strongly that a confidence is generated from that trust.

In its various contexts, the Old Testament introduces the idea that "faith" is based on historical and factual events and leads to the conclusion that all truth comes from God, and is truth because it is related to God. *The concept of "faith" is a human response to historical fact that entails the subjective nature of trust.*

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A Relationship Between Fact and Faith

Just before revealing His covenant with the nation of Israel through Moses, it is God Himself who defines what faith means:

"You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel" (Ex 19:4-6).

1. **Believe** that Yahweh is alive and historically real ("you yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians").

2. **Trust** that engenders an obedience to God's word ("if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant").



The Exodus becomes the historical event that establishes the reality of the invisible God and is the preamble to the Ten Commandments, which is read at least annually with the Decalogue, to remind the Israelites of the reality of God through His historical work (Ex 20:2).

Faith has a basis in historical fact with a view towards the future as God fulfills His covenants.

Abraham (Gen 15:6) is noted as a great example of faith in the New Testament (Rom 4:3; Gal 3:6; James 2:23).

Abraham leaves his home, from Haran to Egypt, on God's verbal promise of the future (Gen 12:1-4).

Despite the age of him and his spouse, Abraham believes in God's promise of an heir (Gen 15:6).

Abraham had no historical basis that God was real!

For his faith, God declares Abraham "righteous" and appropriate for a covenant relationship; the unilateral and unconditional Abrahamic Covenant results. God identifies Himself as "the God of Abraham" (Ex 3:6) and Abraham is known as "God's friend forever" (2 Chron 20:7).

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Faith and the New Testament

As one examines the New Testament, the Hebrew meaning of 'āman is carried over into the Greek word group of "pistis". The Greek noun "pistis" essentially means "faith" or "a trustful human response to God's self revelation via His words or actions."

Derived from "pist-", the Greek verb, pisteuō, means "believe" or "trust." Pisteuō is used consistently in reference to the saving faith and trust of a believer with a focus on the promises of God made through instruments such as Moses (John 5:46), prophets (Luke 24:25; Acts 26:27), angels (Luke 1:20-45; Acts 27:25) and Scripture (John 2:22; Acts 24:14).



Frequently "pisteuō" is used in combination with a Greek preposition forming "pisteuō eis", which means "believe in" (Gal 2:16; John 1:12; 3:18). This thought is not common in the LXX nor in Roman-Greco thought, which call for faith as "believe that." This form of missionary preaching, "believe in," brings a focus on the object of faith Jesus Christ Himself.

Just as there was the objective historical fact of the Exodus that formed the basis of faith in the Old Testament, there is an objective historical fact of Jesus Christ for the basis of faith in the New Testament.

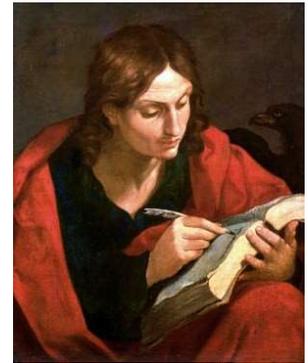
1. **Believe** that the invisible God is alive and historically real, because He sent His only Son (John 1:29-34) whose resurrection proved He died for your sins (John 20:30-31).
2. **Trust** that engenders an obedience to God's word.

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Faith and John 1:1

The apostle John used the verb form "pisteuō," translated as "believe" and sometimes as "trust" or "commit," ninety eight times in the gospel. By stressing its verb form, John presents faith as an intentional act of believing; it is not simply an idea, subjective feeling or the mere assent of a proposition. "Believe" meant the active acceptance of the message about Jesus.



When the apostle John preached "pisteuō eis," he encouraged the acceptance of a Jesus' statements as true; believing grows naturally out of trust in the person. In essence, "believe Jesus when He preaches" (John 8:40-45) or "believe in His word" (John 2:22; 5:47) is equivalent to "believe in the Jesus who is proclaimed."

The apostle John wanted the world to know that the One proclaimed is the Jesus who met them and preached what God will do through Christ.

What the Gospel proclaims as an event, Jesus' act of atonement, is itself the very character of God's word.

In John 1:1 ("In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"), the apostle John develops the thought that God's word and act are unity. Through the Bible, human beings meet God's act, and through God's act is the basis for the Bible.

Of the gospels, the book of John stands unique in making this explicit association: the unity of Jesus Christ with God's word.

www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/9system_salvation/faith5.aspx

Salvation from the Penalty of Sin: Responding to the Call

Paul and Faith

As a former Pharisee, Paul's understanding of faith was shaped by the Mosaic Covenant and its relationship between faith and works.

True obedience to the Law was an outward expression of the Hebrew's inward disposition of faith and fear of God in a covenant relationship with Him.

However in time, the nation of Israel perverted the Law by including their traditions in it. Judaism became a religion that emphasized the knowledge and practice of this distorted law as the basis of faith. Obedience to their law proved one's worth and constituted authentic testimony of "righteousness."



Not unlike Judaism, obedience is a reflection of genuine faith. For example, in his letter to the Romans, Paul opens and closes by encouraging "the obedience of faith" among all Believers (Rom 1:5; 16:26).

However Paul challenges the Jews about the object of their faith.

For Paul genuine faith is active; the act of believing is exhibited by obedience to Jesus Christ.

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Jesus and Faith

The ministry of Jesus Christ provides a rich source of information about God and ourselves. On the surface are explicit statements that reveal clearly what He wants us to know; at a deeper level are implications that are more penetrating and humbling.

When speaking of "faith", Jesus meant a belief based on reality of His deity and the One prophesied by Moses and the Old Testament prophets. "Faith" was not a hypothetical abstraction.

"You men of little faith" (Matt 8:23-27; Mark 4:37-41; Luke 8:22-25)

While sailing across the Sea of Galilee, a sudden storm alarms the disciples who, fearful of drowning, awaken Jesus for help. Jesus rebukes them and calms the sea. Despite demonstrating His power over the natural world by physical healing and the demonic world by exorcism, the disciples did not fully realize who Jesus was. In stilling the storm, Jesus assumed the authority exercised only by God in the Old Testament (Ps 89:8-9; 106:8-9; 107:23-32), and caused the disciple to question, "Who is this?"

What do we learn from the faith of people that is worthy of Jesus' comment?

The Centurion (Matt 8:5-13; Luke 7:2-10)

While imploring Jesus to heal his servant, the centurion prevents Jesus from coming to his home, because of his unworthiness to have such a guest let alone even approach Him. In contrast, Jewish elders appealed to Jesus because they thought the centurion worthy of Jesus' help!



When Jesus speaks of "faith," it is a belief based on the fact that 1) He is the Messiah and 2) human beings recognize the truth about themselves.

Jesus recognized genuine faith when He observed people who understood the true nature of sin, recognized their unworthiness before God and sought His grace in forgiveness (Luke 18:9-14).

Jesus and Faith (continues)

After Jesus' Crucifixion, the gospel points back to this historical event as the basis of faith.

Jesus is real, because He was publicly crucified and resurrected in three days.

God is real, because Jesus is His Son. With Jesus as His mediator of the New Covenant, God partially fulfills the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:3; 22:18; Jer 31:31-32).

Just as in the Old Testament, faith has a basis in historical fact with a view towards the future as God fulfills His covenants.

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Conversion

How Does One Respond to the Invitation For Salvation?

Paul states clearly how one can receive salvation:

But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation (Rom 10:8-10).

Paul indicates that a person's salvation is based on what a person believes in their heart and what they confess with their mouth. Jesus speaks of the heart and its relationship to the mouth in His response to the Jews:

Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned (Matt 12:33-37).

Taken together with Jesus' call, "repent for the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:14; Matt 4:17), Jesus is referring to repentance at the heart level.

Genuine repentance is directed towards God. It involves a significant judgment of oneself and prompts one to turn to God; genuine repentance includes the concept of a radical change – a conversion.

The biblical concept of "repentance" is with this meaning of "to change one's mind." This places an emphasis on the thought and will of a person, and it is in this context that the concept of conversion arises. From a "change of mind" to a "change of behavior," a person "turns" his will from himself to God, or a person "turns away" from sin to "turns" towards holiness.

The biblical concept of "confess" essentially means "to say the same" and signifies an agreement to the historical truth about Jesus (the Son of God who died in atonement for mankind's sin and proved His deity with His resurrection) and the truth about the sinful state of human beings.

Confronted with these facts, confession is the verbal acknowledgment of repentance that has taken place within one's heart and a declaration of commitment to Jesus Christ, Savior and Lord.

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How is Faith An Act of Obedience?

In His commitment to His divine covenants, God provides the Messiah:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:16-18).

Jesus sees faith as a command:

Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent" (John 6:28-29).

The apostles understand a saving faith as an act of obedience:

Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the **obedience of faith among all the Gentiles** for His name's sake, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; (Rom 1:1-5)

Since you have in **obedience to the truth** purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God (1 Pet 1:22).

But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to **those who obey Him**" (Acts 5:29-32).

As a contrast, unbelief is seen as disobedience:

He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but **he who does not obey the Son** will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him (John 3:36).

This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, the stone which the builders rejected, this became the very corner stone, and, a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense; for they stumble because **they are disobedient to the word**, and to this doom they were also appointed (1 Pet 2:7-8).

However, **they did not all heed the good news**; for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" (Rom 10:16)
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Justification

When a person accepts the good news of the gospel and expresses a genuine faith in Jesus Christ, the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed upon the new Believer (Rom 5:17-21).



Jesus was righteous, because He was the means by which God kept His covenant promise and satisfied God's judicial judgment of humanity's sin (Rom 3:25-26; 2 Cor 5:21).

"Justification" is the verdict of judgment that God makes after righteousness has been determined; it is declaring a change in the legal status of a human being.

God's declaration deems a defendant as justified, free from guilt and acceptable to Him (Rom 5:18).

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Adoption and Regeneration

With the legal determination of justification, God adopts the new Believer and establishes a legal relationship with rights of inheritance (John 1:9-13 Eph 1:3-8).

Once a son of God (Gal 4:6), the new Believer receives the Holy Spirit. This process is called "being born again" or "regeneration" and marks the first step in the process of sanctification.



Regeneration occurs instantly at initial salvation (1 Pet 1:23-25; James 1:18) and is a partial fulfillment of God's promise in the New Covenant.

It indicates a change in the origin of one's birth. As being "born of God," Christians receive the birthright entitling them to the promises of God (Gal 4:1-7).

Christians are now a "new creation" which describes the transformative effects of regeneration including a transformation of one's moral standard and lifestyle (Eph 4:17-24).

Adoption and regeneration are God's sovereign acts of committing Himself to Believers. They also represent an affirmation to Believers of their trust in God which continues to grow out of His Fatherhood (Rom 8:14-17), not only of the present, but of the future hope still to be fulfilled (Rom 8:23).

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What is Sanctification?

Sanctification

Sanctification is the process of salvation from the power of sin.

To "sanctify" means to "be holy", "consecrate", or "to separate and devote to God".

"Be holy" places a focus on God and the realm that He exists in. As God is holy, His name is Holy and all that comes to His realm must be holy. All that belongs to God's realm or comes in contact with it must be sanctified; it all of those things that God separates and devotes to Himself that become holy: time, space, objects and people.

Sanctification (continues)

Most people understand sanctification as "Christian living."

The focus of sanctification is largely on principles and character one should live by.

It often answers the question, "What would Jesus do?" in various situations in life.

But if the process of sanctifying oneself is simply a code of ethics, Christian ethics would not be any different from any other religious or philosophical ethics.



Because God demands that we be holy because He is holy, Christian ethics places a demand for holiness. This significant point was neglected by the Jews in their approach to the Law of Moses and contributed to their failure.

An ethic is not good simply for its goodness; **it is good, because it makes one holy.**

To sanctify oneself is to live by an ethic demanded by God; it is a life lived recognizing the privilege of being a child of God and the grace by which that privilege is extended.

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How is the Trinity Involved?

How Does God Sanctify?

Through the Abrahamic Covenant, God works to sanctify all human beings.

For Non-Believers, the provisions made through the Mosaic and New Covenants provide:

- an opportunity for faith in and
- means for sanctification (Jesus Christ)

For Believers and the process of sanctification, God:

- Teaches what sin is
- Provides an example of what it means to be holy
- Works through His word the Bible
- Motives Believers to be children without fault and pleasing to His sight
- Disciplines by rebuking and educating the Believer what holy behavior is



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How Does Jesus Christ Sanctify?

As mediator of the New Covenant (Heb 7:18-8:15), Jesus works to sanctify all Believers in the following manner:

- Believers are forgiven of their sins (Eph 1:7; 4:32; Col 1:14) which makes one holy in the eyes of God.

How Does Jesus Christ Sanctify? (continues)

- Believers have a spiritual union with Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 5:17; Col 1:26-29), which indicates a two way relationship and reveals that Jesus sanctifies progressively from the inside – out: "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).



Jesus Christ provides the power for the Believer to live a sanctified life (Gal 2:19-20; Rom 8:10-11; 2 Cor 13:5), and this dependence should not be forgotten.

- Sharing a spiritual union with Jesus Christ implies that Believers share in the work of God; namely, to show other human beings that Jesus Christ is the means of sanctification so that God can dwell among His people (Matt 28:16-20).
- Paul understands the union in Jesus Christ to include imitating Him in all behavior (1 Cor 11:1; 1 John 2:3-6; Rom 15:7; Eph 5:25; Col 3:13; 1 John 3:16; 1 Pet 2:21-24; Philip 3:10). And this imitation serves the purpose of developing Believers in becoming more like Jesus in holiness (Eph 4:13-15; Rom 8:29).
- Corporately, this spiritual union with Jesus Christ unites a Believer with other Believers (Matt 18:20; Rom 12:5) serving each other and serving God (Rom 12:9-13).

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How Does the Holy Spirit Sanctify?

As God promised in the New Covenant, the Believer is bestowed the gift of the Holy Spirit (Isa 59:21; Ezek 36:25-28), who becomes an agent of sanctification. The Holy Spirit is "another Counselor" and the "Spirit of truth" (John 14:16-17, 25-26; 15:26).

The Holy Spirit sanctifies by washing the heart and renewing the mind (Tit 3:4-7).

The Holy Spirit sanctifies by assuring the Believer of the indwelling presence of Jesus Christ (1 John 3:24).

The Holy Spirit sanctifies by helping the Believer understand the Scriptures (1 Cor 2:10-16; Eph 3:3-6).

The Holy Spirit sanctifies by attesting to the reality of Believer's faith, brands the Believer as a property of God's, and guarantees his inheritance in the future completion of salvation (2 Cor 1:21-22; 5:5).



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Responsibility of the Believer

How Does a Believer Cooperate?

Before a Believer makes any effort of sanctification, the New Covenant has accomplished what God intended by blessing the Believer with access to spiritual wisdom and motivation to be a holy people; an unconditional covenant that a Believer cannot break (Jer 31:31-33). This enables the Believer to sanctify himself, separate himself from the profane, and devote and dedicate himself to God in the following manner:

Salvation from the Power of Sin: Responsibility of the Believer

How Does a Believer Cooperate? (continues)

1. **Sanctify his mind.** With the help of the Holy Spirit in learning the truth about Jesus and understanding the Bible, one reappraises the facts of life and worldview perspective (Rom 12:2; Col 1:9-10; 3:9-11; Philip 1:9; 2 Cor 10:4-5; Eph 4:17-24).
2. **Sanctify his will.** With the spiritual union of the Trinity, one's purpose in life is altered (Philip 2:12-13; 2 Cor 7:1).
3. **Sanctify his character.** In cooperating with the Holy Spirit, one produces the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22; 1 John 2:29; 3:9-10).
4. **Sanctify his body.** In recognition of sanctification through the forgiveness of sin and the consecration by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, one learns about the sanctity of his human body (1 Cor 3:16; 6:15-20; 9:27; Rom 6:12).

However this process of sanctification is determined to the extent of one's efforts of cooperating with the Holy Spirit. It requires the Believer's effort in (Rom 12:1-2):

Bible Study and Reflection: Bible study is a **personal** responsibility to deepen one's relationship with God (John 14:21), live as His people (Ps 1:1-3; Matt 4:4; John 17:17; Col 3:16) and discern good from evil (Heb 5:14; Philip 4:8).

Prayer and Worship: Prayer and worship are **personal** responsibilities to communicate with God in praise and thanksgiving (Eph 6:18; Philip 4:6; Eph 5:18-20).

Continual Self Improvement: The process of sanctification is a **personal** responsibility to run from the "old" self to the "new" without stopping or looking back (Rom 6:5-7; Col 3:9-10; 2 Cor 3:12-18; Philip 3:10-16; Heb 12:1-14).

Christian Fellowship: Christian fellowship is a **personal** responsibility towards other Believers as they have a responsibility towards you (1 Cor 12:12-26; Gal 6:1-2; Eph 4:1-16; Heb 10:24-25; 1 Thess 5:11) in serving God together (1 Pet 1:13-14; 2:5-9).



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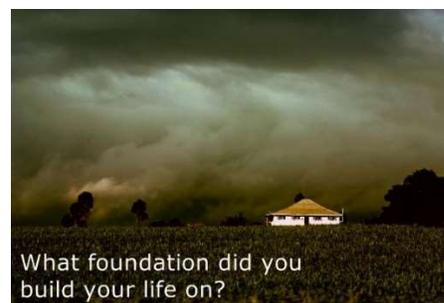
Perseverance

Perseverance is the steadfast and enduring effort of following God's commands and doing His work, and it can be an indication of how genuine a Believer's faith is (James 2:14-26).

Moses exhibited a persevering faith that endured, because he held the expectation of seeing God (Heb 11:27). Moses' faith was not based on an invisible abstract idea; it was based on the reality of actually seeing God and having a genuine relationship with Him (Ex 33:11; Num 12:7-8).

Paul speaks of perseverance Ephesians 6:18 in the context of the armor of God and struggles Believers will have with demonic forces as he personally experienced (Acts 13:6-11; 16:16-18; 19:11).

In their letters, the apostles expand the concept of perseverance beyond faith to include the life and character as God's people. They exhort Believers to persevere in doing God's work.



It appears that only those with a genuine faith will have the certitude to persevere (Matt 24:13; Mark 13:13).

Perseverance not only reflects one's certainty in God covenant fidelity and trust in Jesus' guarantee of eternal life, but an understanding of the implications of the gospel; it reflects a Believer's deep appreciation of God's saving grace and develops his godly character.

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Glorification

When Jesus refers to the end times, he speaks of a resurrection of both Believers and non-Believers (John 5:28-29; 6:39-44, 54).

The apostle Paul elaborates on the differences between the resurrection of the two groups of people as a comparison between the natural body and the spiritual body: Adam verses Jesus, living being verses life giving spirit, and origin from the dust of the earth verses from heaven.

With these comparisons, Paul defines two classes of human beings:

- 1) those who are of Adam will bear the body and likeness of the earthly man and
- 2) those who are of Jesus will bear the body and likeness of the heavenly Man (1 Cor 15:45-49).

The significance is that only the one with a spiritual body will enter the kingdom of God.



"Glorification" is the future aspect of salvation and known as salvation from the presence of sin. It is a process that takes place over a period of time and is completed when the Believer receives his resurrected body and become a true image of God. It is the final step of sanctification and conclusion of the whole salvation process in which a Believer is made completely pure and enables complete access into the presence of God (Rev 21:27).

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Final Judgment

After the resurrection, the last event to consummate the end of the age is the judgment of mankind (Rev 20:11-15).

The biblical account refers to a singular book, the Book of Life, and a number of additional books listing the deeds of each human being, for which each must give an account (Rev 20:12; 1 Cor 3:13).

Bema - A Greek term for a platform or dias on which placed a seat for an official.

**Judgment seat of God (Rom 14:10)
Judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:10)**

Seldom mentioned, the Book of Life (Ex 32:32-33; Ps 69:28; Phil 4:3) is a list of names of those who will enter the Kingdom of God (Rev 3:5); however, there is never a mention of a book listing the names of those who are disbarred.

And it is implied that everyone created is listed in the Book of Life until some judicial determination is made that would cause a person's name to be "blotted out" and removed (Rev 3:5; Matt 7:21-23; 10:32-33; Luke 12:8-9).

Ancient cities maintained their census by recording the name of each citizen in a register until their death whereupon their name was removed.

This would be consistent with the idea that the atonement of Jesus Christ was indeed unlimited and for all (Mark 10:45; 1 John 2:2); however, only those who have faith will kept their names in the Book of Life, because their sins have been forgiven (Col 2:13-15; John 1:29; Rom 8:31-35).

Judgment is the final step of sanctification and conclusion of the whole salvation process in which a Believer is made completely pure and enabling complete access into the presence of God (Rev 21:27).

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Conclusion

When sin entered at the beginning of human history, God's solution addressed the past, present and future consequences of sin.

God's love is the motive for atonement and salvation is His objective.

Believers are adopted as God's sons, assisted in their maturation as God's sons and in the end, when God's work is completed, manifested as God's sons.

The glory of salvation is the triumph over evil and the destruction of its presence from human beings, and the establishment of the kingdom of God.

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Epilogue

Are you a Christian running the race of your life?

Or are you still at the starting gate or stumbled off the track?

Or perhaps you not yet in the race...

While many may start well, not all finish well (1 Cor 9:24-27).

The Christian life is not easy; but it is joy filled and fulfilling.

Those who succeed train intentionally and adapt their training appropriately for the runner's age and circumstance.

Come join your fellow Believers in this race together!

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About the author

Before I embarked on this ministry, the theology I embraced was based on the theology of other academic theologians. I never had the time or resources to study in depth various doctrinal issues, so when difficult interpretive issues arose, I accepted the logic and theological framework of my authoritative theologians.

The doctrine of salvation has so many points of controversy that it was so much easier to plead ignorance than to contest and take a Berean approach.

When I retired, I used my time to investigate those nagging issues that never really made sense to me, and this study on salvation was the result of a four year study. The approach I used was from the ground up by examining the most basic components; however, you must bear in mind that I never went to seminary or learned Greek or Hebrew.

Although I tried to be very careful, I'm certain you will find errors and flaws in my methods and conclusions, or disagree with my hermeneutics. But I am willing to expose myself in this public disclosure of what I believe in hopes that you would be challenged in reviewing your theology and examining the Text yourself. You may be surprised at what the Holy Spirit may show you as I was.

For me, this was a wonderful adventure as the whole concept of salvation now makes sense to me, and I can take the Bible's words in their natural meaning. I marvel at the elegance and beauty of God's logic and fidelity throughout the entire Bible.

But I strongly encourage you to do your own study and take a Berean approach.

Read, pray and share with others what God is teaching you. Be a blessing; we all need help in the process of sanctification.

Doug (3/15/2013)

