

An aerial photograph of a winding river flowing through a dense, vibrant green forest. The river's path is S-shaped, creating a central island. The lighting is bright, highlighting the textures of the trees and the dark blue water of the river.

PROPHETIC STUDY SERIES

PREDESTINATION VS. FREE WILL

WAKE UP AMERICA SEMINARS

Proclaiming the Revelation of Jesus

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On occasion, I have inserted italics and brackets in Scripture quotations to enhance understanding, not to change the meaning.

May God bless you as you study this fascinating topic!

Larry Wilson

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Predestination vs. Free Will

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations. ‘Alas, Sovereign Lord,’ I said, ‘I do not know how to speak; I am too young.’” – Jeremiah 1:5-6

Jesus Our Creator

As our Creator, Jesus is the source of life. He could have created slaves or robots, but instead He created intelligent beings who are free to exercise the power of choice. Human beings can choose to obey God or rebel against Him. Jesus speaks and worlds appear. He is capable of doubling the size of our infinite universe in a split second by simply commanding it. He could also speak Earth’s entire solar system out of existence and we would cease to exist the very moment His words were spoken. Through Him everything exists. Without Him, there is nothing. He creates matter. He destroys matter. He sets limits and no one can change them.¹ Although Jesus has omnipotence, He will not violate the power of choice granted to any person.

¹ Colossians 1

Jesus said to Isaiah, **“This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the Lord, the Maker of all things, who stretches out the heavens, who spreads out the earth by myself, who foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense.”**¹
“Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, ‘My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.’ From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that I will do.”²

Omniscience

Members of the Godhead are omniscient. This means they know everything about the past, present, and future. Before Jesus created the world, the Godhead knew the names of the individuals who would choose eternal life and those who would not. This fact bothers many people because they cannot

¹ Isaiah 44:24-25

² Isaiah 46:9-11

reconcile God's omnipotence with His omniscience. Some people believe God has already decided who is going to live forever and who is going to die forever; so, no matter what we do, the outcome has already been predetermined. This concept is called "fatalism." Fatalism interprets every event that happens as God's predetermined will and it is a false doctrine. The devil would like people to believe that they have no choice about their eternal destiny. He also wants us to believe that Jesus created some people simply for destruction. Both ideas are false.

Some Things are Predestined

The definition of predestination is, "to decree beforehand." Because the members of the Godhead are omnipotent, they can predestine anything they want. Notice, I did not write anyone they want. For example, when Jesus agreed to die in man's place, His death was predestined long before the actual event occurred. Because of God's foreknowledge, He prepared the Plan of Salvation and before He created the world. The Godhead foreknew sin would rise on Earth and when the rescue was needed, they instituted the Plan. To put divine foreknowledge into perspective, consider it to be like

carrying a diaper bag when you have a newborn baby. You know the baby will need a fresh diaper and you are prepared for that eventuality. This is foreknowledge. However, your foreknowledge does not predetermine the need for a fresh diaper.

Predestination simply means God can decree beforehand anything to happen, and it will happen because He has the power and authority to make it happen. Again, Jesus said, **“I say, ‘My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.’ From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that I will do.”**¹ *Predestination is a function of God’s omnipotence and foreknowledge is a function of God’s omniscience.* Foreknowledge simply means God knows everything. He knows what our choices will be – not because He makes them happen, but because He knows what we will choose to do. Let me repeat, God does not predestine everything that happens. God did not predestine the rise of sin. Therefore, we should not interpret every event in life as a predestined event. God did not predestine Adam and Eve to sin, but He

¹ Isaiah 46:10-11

knew they would sin. In the same way, the Father knows who will choose or forfeit eternal life.

Jesus Lays Divine Prerogatives Aside

When Jesus stepped “in the way” of the executing angel who was preparing to execute Adam and Eve, Jesus became the “Son of God” that very day. According to the provisions of the plan to save humanity, Jesus agreed to release His prerogatives at an appointed time in the future on the day Adam sinned. Even though Jesus was an equal member of the Godhead, He agreed to become subject to the Father’s will at the time of His birth.¹ Therefore, Jesus is often called the Son of God.² During Old Testament times, Jesus sometimes exercised omniscience and omnipotence, but when He was born He laid these powers aside to become a man.

It is a mystery how Jesus could set these powers of divinity aside, but He put aside other divine prerogatives for our salvation. For example, He became subject to death (mortal) and completely experienced sin’s penalty when He was put to death by execution!³ After He put these prerogatives aside,

1 John 6:38

2 Psalm 2 and Hebrews 1:5; 5:5

3 Hebrews 2:17; 10:12-14; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21

He returned to heaven and was found worthy to regain them on the basis of His perfect compliance with the Plan of Salvation and the Father's will.¹

Remember, when Jesus was born of Mary, certain limitations were placed on Jesus' power for a period of time. For example, He said, **"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."**² In other words, in His human form, Jesus did not know the date He would return to Earth, because the Father had not revealed this information to Him. However, Daniel 7 and Revelation 4 and 5 reveal that a time came when Jesus' omnipotence and omniscience were returned to Him.³ It is obvious that Jesus increases in power and authority throughout the process of saving man, just like the infant Jesus grew in wisdom and favor with God and man!⁴ At the end of all earthly events, when Jesus has acquired all that heaven can offer, He gives it all back to the Father so Jesus can live among His subjects as one of them.⁵

1 Revelation 4 and 5

2 Matthew 24:36

3 Daniel 7:13-14

4 Hebrews 2:8; Luke 2:52

5 1 Corinthians 15:24-28

Careful! Easy to Distort!

God has not predestined some people to be lost and others to be saved. The Bible says, **“He [the Father] predestined us [fallen human beings] for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.”**¹ **“He [God] is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”**² Be careful! These texts are easy to distort. Ephesians 1:5 does not say that God predestined a certain number of people to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ – implying that all others are predestined for eternal death. This text says that God has predestined fallen man to be adopted as His sons through Jesus.

In other words, God predestined the adoption process. It is called justification! **“Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.”**³ Did you notice whom God justifies? To maintain that

1 Ephesians 1:5, insertions mine

2 2 Peter 3:9, insertion mine

3 Romans 4:4-5

God predestines our eternal reward makes a mockery of the Plan of Salvation. If God predestined the eternal reward of a man without recognizing man's actions or power of choice, the Plan of Salvation would be a deceptive scheme. If God predestined people to be saved and others to be lost, a Plan of Salvation would not be necessary. What would be the point of choosing to follow the Holy Spirit if you are predestined to be lost? A simple example of the difference between predestination and foreknowledge is predestination (decreeing beforehand) is setting the alarm clock to ring at 5:00 the next morning, while foreknowledge (knowing beforehand) is looking at a clock and observing that the alarm is set to ring at 5:00 a.m. God does not predestine eternal destiny, but He does predestine events. One such event is making the process of adoption available to all mankind.

God Predestines People for Service

God sometimes predestines people to accomplish certain activities. Notice these three texts:

“The word of the Lord came to me [Jeremiah], saying, ‘Before I formed you in the womb I

knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.’”¹

“This is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: I will go before you and will level the mountains; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me.”²

“By the word of the Lord he [the man of God] cried out against the altar: ‘Altar, altar! This is what the Lord says: “A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who make offerings here, and human bones will be burned on you.” ’”³

These verses represent certain extremes. In the first text, God appointed Jeremiah, the Jew, to be a prophet before he was born. In the second text,

1 Jeremiah 1:4-5, insertion mine

2 Isaiah 45:1, 2, 5

3 1 Kings 13:2, insertion mine

God appointed Cyrus, the pagan, to be a great king who would conquer the Babylonians. In the third text, the birth and reformation of King Josiah was foretold. We know that God is no respecter of persons.¹ He loved Jeremiah, Cyrus, and Josiah, and they were born with a destiny of service for God. However, God appointing them to service has nothing to do with their eternal reward. That choice remained their exclusive privilege to decide.

These texts demonstrate that God has a plan for our life even before we are born!² However, God's appointment does not mean that we are forced to fulfill His calling. He respects our power of choice and if we so choose, we can turn our backs on God as King Saul did. Although God appointed Saul to be Israel's first king,³ Saul became evil in God's eyes because of rebellion. Eventually, the Lord refused to have any further interaction with Saul.⁴ Remember, God may predestine a person for certain tasks, but He does not predestine anyone for eternal life or death.

Critical Difference

1 Acts 10:34

2 Psalm 139:16

3 1 Samuel 15:1

4 1 Samuel 28:6

There is a critical difference between God's foreknowledge and God's power to predetermine an event. Predestination pre-decrees the outcome, whereas foreknowledge knows the outcome in advance. The future is to the Godhead what the past is to us. It is unchangeable. We may have a perfect view of our past, but we are powerless to change one word, thought, or deed. Likewise, the Father is powerless, under the rule of love, to alter or change the future in any way. The critical question is can He be trusted to leave the future unchanged. Any manipulation of the future by God would be a malicious act because He claims His universe is governed by the rule of love. The presence of Lucifer and sin prove intelligent creatures have the power of choice. Obviously, God is love because Jesus' death proves His love for mankind. The rebellion of one third of His angels, the fall of Lucifer, and the dire consequences of Adam and Eve's sin prove that God will not interfere with the inalienable right of all intelligent beings to exercise their power of choice. This is why the future, as far as God is concerned, is unchangeable. He allows it to unfold according to the choices of His subjects and He responds accordingly.

Perhaps one more illustration will demonstrate the critical difference between foreknowledge and predestination. Suppose an airplane pilot can look down from 10,000 feet and see the twists and turns of a long river. In one glance, he can see the end and the beginning. Also, imagine people traveling down the river in a boat, not knowing where the river leads. The pilot of the airplane can see where the boat will be when it reaches the end of its journey, but the pilot of the airplane has nothing to do with the travelers reaching that destination. Instead, he can only see where the boaters will be when they reach the end of the river. Knowing the end from the beginning without interference is foreknowledge. On the other hand, predestination is pre-decreeing an event will occur, such as setting an alarm clock to go off at a certain time.

God predestines events to happen. He also predestines people for service, but He does not predestine the eternal destiny of people. Because God has foreknowledge, He knows what people are going to do. He not only grants us the power of choice, He insists that we use it!¹

1 John 3:16

Jesus Foreknew Israel's Apostasy

The Old Testament story of Israel illustrates how Jesus does not use His foreknowledge to change the outcome of events, even when they run contrary to His will! Notice this prophecy, **“And the Lord said to Moses: ‘You are going to rest with your ancestors, and these people will soon prostitute themselves to the foreign gods of the land they are entering. They will forsake me and break the covenant I made with them. And in that day I will become angry with them and forsake them; I will hide my face from them, and they will be destroyed. Many disasters and calamities will come on them, and in that day they will ask, “Have not these disasters come on us because our God is not with us?” And I will certainly hide my face in that day because of all their wickedness in turning to other gods.’”**¹

Jesus knew what the nation of Israel would do in the future and He shared this information with Moses. The Old Testament record confirms what Jesus knew. However, it also confirms that Jesus did not use His foreknowledge to make Israel a stubborn and

¹ Deuteronomy 31:16-18

stiff-necked people.¹ In fact, just the opposite is true! The Old Testament verifies that God did everything possible to redirect Israel from its terrible ways. Time after time He sent His servants the prophets, but Israel chose to rebel against God!² Jesus knew that Israel would rebel before they rebelled!

From the Creation of the World

Consider the contents of this text: **“The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and yet will come up out of the Abyss and go to its destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because it once was, now is not, and yet will come.”**³ This text indicates the wicked, whose names were not written in the Book of Life from the creation of the world, will be amazed when they see the beast (the Anti-christ) that will rise up out of nowhere (the Abyss).

We can interpret this text to say, “God knew in advance who was going to be lost beginning with the time of creation to the final moment of Earth’s

1 Ezekiel 3:7; Jeremiah 7:26

2 Jeremiah 3

3 Revelation 17:8

history and He left their names out of the Book of Life.” This statement is true, but understand that the wicked are not lost because God left their names out of the Book of Life. Instead, the wicked are lost because they chose to rebel against God’s authority! A profound point found within this text is during the Great Tribulation, Jesus will do everything possible to save men and women. He will save to the utmost. Jesus will present the terms and conditions of salvation so clearly and so powerfully that no one will be able to justify rebellion against God or claim ignorance of His will.

Jesus said, **“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”**¹ John’s comment in Revelation 17:8 is set in the context of the final days of the Great Tribulation, after God has done everything possible to save mankind. John is amazed at what length God has gone to save man from the penalty of sin, even though God foreknew who would rebel.

The Godhead has omniscience, they know everything, but they do not use their omniscience to ma-

¹ Matthew 24:14

nipulate their creatures or alter the oncoming future. If they did, they would be guilty of a terrible breach of confidence. From the Godhead's comprehensive perspective of the universe, the future is clearly laid out, even though their creatures create the future as each day arrives. The good news is that the Godhead can be trusted with this incredible power. As events unfold during the Great Tribulation, it will be demonstrated and proven that the Godhead is righteous, pure, above reproach, and trustworthy. God's omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence mean that wherever we are in the grand march of time, God is already there. Throughout the endless corridors of eternity, nothing surprises God. He knows everything and is prepared for every eventuality His creatures might choose. This fact should be most reassuring to finite beings who put their trust in Him. **“From everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him.”**¹

Predestination Does Not Mean Forcing the Outcome

The Bible contains many apparent conflicts. This booklet considers a textual conflict which can be

¹ Psalm 103:17

resolved so that all Bible passages are harmonious, but the resolution does not come easily. It is true that God has predestined certain events, but it is also true that God permits people to exercise free will. The key to resolving this conflict is in knowing which elements were predestined and which are free will.

Even though many Bible texts do not use the word predestination, the texts are related to the topic. Truth is proven true by the harmony that comes from the sum of its parts. For example, God's omnipotence and omniscience have substantial roles within the topic of predestination. Many people believe that since God is all powerful and all knowing, He has predetermined who will be saved and who will not and there is no possibility of changing the outcome. For these people, there is no difference between God knowing the outcome and forcing the outcome.

Consider the ramifications of this logic: If God has predetermined the outcome of all things, He is responsible for everything that happens. This logic makes Him responsible for sin because He predetermined that Lucifer and one third of heaven's an-

gels would sin and be cast out of heaven. Then, He forced Adam and Eve to sin; and to save certain people from death, He forced Jesus to die on the cross. This logic makes God the Creator of sorrow, sickness, and death. Worse yet, He is the source of wicked behavior including dishonesty, hatred, cruelty, and sexual immorality. If all of these dreadful characteristics describing God are true, then predestining who will go to heaven and burn in hell is not out of His character. Moreover, if these allegations are true, then God is the greatest liar in the universe. He claims to be a God of love; He claims that righteousness and justice are the foundations of His throne, but these words are lies if God created some people to end up in heaven and others to end up in hell.

God is not a liar. He is righteous and does not force anyone into sin. If He did, no one would want to spend eternity with Him. There is a simple solution to harmonizing predestination with free will. Knowing the outcome is not the same as forcing the outcome. It is possible for the divine powers, foreknowledge and omnipotence to operate in God's heart without interference.

A Living Trust

Before heaven and Earth were created, the Father foreknew that sin would occur and this would separate mankind from His presence as no sinner can live in God's glorious and holy presence. Therefore, He created a plan to save sinners and He designed this plan to operate as a living trust.

A living trust is a process whereby the assets of a benefactor are distributed to beneficiaries through the services of a trustee or trustees. Trustees have specific obligations established by the trust. They are to complete the terms and conditions of the trust and distribute the assets of the benefactor to beneficiaries. Trustees are servants of the trust. They are not free to act on their own, they do not own the assets of the trust, and they are not permitted to appropriate the assets of the trust to themselves.

After Adam and Eve sinned, God chose patriarchs to be the trustees of His gospel. However, the sons of God (the patriarchs, the spiritual leaders) became distracted with beautiful women who had no interest in spiritual matters. Consequently, the world became so wicked and degenerate that af-

ter 1,600 years, God cleansed Earth with a flood and started over. Then, He chose the descendants of Abraham to serve as the trustees of His gospel. Israel became so wicked and rebellious that after God patiently waited 1,400 years, He sent Jesus as a divine messenger to Israel but they crucified Him. So, God started over with a new covenant with believers in Christ (Christians) to serve as the trustees of His gospel. However, after 1,600 years of apostasy, He had to make a change and caused a reformation with Christians and Protestants. After a mere 200 years, these trustees have become so divided, confused, and blasphemous that God has given up on them. When the Great Tribulation begins, God will start over for one last time. He will select 144,000 individuals to be His trustees and these people will accomplish, within a mere 1,260 days, all He wants done.

If the Plan of Salvation does operate as a living trust, the textual conflict is resolved. Predestination and free will are not in conflict within a living trust. Before creation, God predestined that groups of people would serve as trustees of His gospel. Because He gives people free will, they may choose

to receive or reject the gospel. During the Christian era, God appointed trustees to serve His beneficiaries: **“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”**¹

When Jesus was on Earth, he emphasized that individuals have a choice to believe or disbelieve: **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever [chooses to] believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”**² **“The [Holy] Spirit and the bride [the people of God] say, ‘Come!’ And let the one who hears [the invitation also] say, ‘Come!’ Let the one who is [hungry and] thirsty [for truth and peace] come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life [which flows from the throne of God].”**³

The Bible teaches God has predestined certain events. For example, He told Noah He would send the flood 120 years later.⁴ He told Daniel that Messiah would die in the middle of the 70th week.⁵ He

1 Ephesians 4:11-12

2 John 3:16, insertion mine

3 Revelation 22:17, insertions mine

4 Genesis 6:3

5 Daniel 9:26-27

revealed to John that the date of the sixth trumpet has been determined to the very hour, day, month, and year.¹ Jesus plainly told His inquiring disciples just before He ascended that the Father has set dates and times according to His own authority. **“He said to them: ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.’”**² Jesus said that it was not necessary for them to know certain dates because He did not want His disciples to understand that His return would be 2,000 years later. If Jesus had revealed this, Christianity would have died before the end of the first century A.D.

When Israel camped at the base of Mt. Sinai, God immediately told Abraham’s descendants that their position as trustees of His covenant (gospel) was conditional. He sent Moses to Israel with the big “if.” **“Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, ‘This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob.’”**³ **“Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests**

1 Revelation 9:15

2 Acts 1:7

3 Exodus 19:3

and a holy nation [my trustees].”¹ “So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the Lord had commanded him to speak.”² “The people all responded together, ‘We will do everything the Lord has said.’ So Moses brought their answer back to the Lord.”³

The Lord gave Israel these instructions: **“I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison [of sin’s curse] and to release from the dungeon those who sit in [spiritual] darkness.”⁴**

Israel failed to meet these terms and God’s patience ended when Israel refused to receive Jesus as the Messiah. This is why Jesus terminated the trusteeship of Israel shortly before His death saying: **“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together,**

1 Exodus 19:5-6, insertion mine

2 Exodus 19:7

3 Exodus 19:8

4 Isaiah 42:6-7, insertions mine

as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”¹

After Jesus ascended, the Jews persecuted the apostles and believers in Jesus. One reason was that early Christians understood God had abandoned old Israel and created a new Israel.² Christians also understood that under the new covenant, all believers in Christ are trustees and commissioned to proclaim the gospel.³ Paul and Barnabas affirmed this transition when speaking to the Gentiles: **“For this is what the Lord has commanded us [that is, all believers in Christ]: ‘I have made you [to be a new Israel, you are now the seed of Abraham, heirs of the promise given to him, you are now] a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’ When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.”⁴**

1 Matthew 23:37-39

2 James 1:1; 2:1; Galatians 3:28-29; Ephesians 2

3 Matthew 28:19-20

4 Acts 13:47-48

The last nine words of Acts 13:48 are often used to justify the idea that God has predetermined who receives eternal life. If these were the only words on the topic of predestination, the conclusion would be reasonable. Since many other texts were written and the setting during which these words were spoken should be considered, they have a different meaning. These nine words mean, “Gentiles can receive salvation without becoming Jews.” When God established Christians as His trustees, God opened the door to salvation to the Gentiles through Christ, whereas the door to salvation had previously been through Israel. Under the new covenant, God ordained that Gentiles could become heirs of Abraham through Christ and this took old Israel entirely out of the loop. Therefore, the phrase, “**all who were appointed** [that is, the Father had predestined that the Gentiles should hear the gospel and those who were convicted of their need] **for eternal life believed.**”

From the very beginning, it was God’s plan that after Jesus died, there would no longer be any distinction between Jews and Gentiles. Of course, the Jews could not know this (and it remains unknown

to them) until God revealed this fact to Paul. Notice his words to the church at Ephesus: **“In reading this [Paul is referring to his comments in Chapter 2], then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to people in 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 in Christ Jesus.”**¹

“For he [the Father] chose us [all who believe] in him [Jesus] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ [whether Jew or Gentile], in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.”² **“In him [Jesus] we were also chosen [to become trustees], having been predestined [for this task] according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity**

1 Ephesians 3:4-6

2 Ephesians 1:4-6, insertions mine

with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.”¹

James understood old Israel had lost its trusteeship and new Israel had been appointed as trustees. This is why he defined “the twelve tribes of Israel” as believers in Christ.² He wrote, **“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us [Christians] birth through the word of truth, that we [as believers in Christ] might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.”³**

God has always had an “elect” on Earth who are appointed to serve as trustees. His chosen people have the task of distributing the love of the Father to His beneficiaries. **“But you [believers in Christ] are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you [as trustees of His gospel] may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you [Gentiles] were not a**

1 Ephesians 1:11-12, insertions mine

2 James 1:1, 2:1

3 James 1:17-18, insertions mine

people [you were not a chosen nation like old Israel], **but now you are the people of God** [as believers in Jesus you are the new Israel]; **once you had not received mercy** [such favor], **but now** [through Jesus] **you have received mercy** [astounding favor].”¹

Jesus does not deal with His creatures on the basis of His foreknowledge. Instead, He deals with man on the basis of love and our current needs. Aren't you glad! Although He can see the end from the beginning, He does not use that knowledge to manipulate us. God can be trusted. He will not change the future to protect Himself or His universe. He carefully respects our power of choice. Jesus is the only parent who would send His child through four years of college at enormous cost, knowing in advance that the child is going to fail. Taking this simple point to its logical conclusion, we can only conclude that God's love is profoundly amazing! Who else, but God, would create the cherub Lucifer and give him everything that heaven could offer knowing in advance that Lucifer would eventually choose to become His worst enemy?

1 1 Peter 2:9-10, insertions mine

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An aerial photograph of a winding river cutting through a dense, lush green forest. The river is a deep blue color and curves through the landscape, creating a path that leads the eye from the top right towards the bottom left. The forest is a vibrant green, with some areas appearing slightly darker, possibly due to shadows or different types of trees. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

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