

The Doctrine of Election

Part 1: What Election is Not!

Dr. Hershel Hobbs in his *Fundamentals of the Faith*, p. 89 states, “The Doctrine of Election is one of the most vital in the Bible – and one of the least understood.” The word “election” is not found in the Old Testament at all and it is found six times in the New Testament in Romans 9:11; 11:5, 7, 28; 1 Thess 1:4; 2 Peter 2:10. The basic meaning of the Greek word *ekloga*, means to chose. In reference to God it refers to His prerogative to chose what He would do even before the world was created, see Jn 17:24; Eph 1:4; 1 Pet 1:20. In order to understand the doctrine of election it is important to understand what it is not before discussion of exactly what election is.

Let us first this lesson consider four things that election is not.

1. Election does not mean God totally eliminates human choice. The Bible presents a balance of God’s sovereignty vs. limited human free will. If this is not true then passages like Revelation 22:17, “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires let him take the water of life freely.” Other such passages include Isaiah 55:1-2, 6-7. Galatians 5:13 and 1 Peter 2:15 warn about the misuse of our limited free will. The answer to the irreconcilable ideas of the sovereignty of God vs. the limited freewill of human life is not a watered down version of either truth, but the proclamation of both, even though we can’t understand or explain it.
2. Election is not God’s way of limiting salvation to a selected group. John 3:16 declares, “For God so loved the world . . .” Why not, God so loved the elect? The answer is that salvation is offered to all not to a few. God loves all people and is not willing that any should perish, 2 Pet 3:9.
3. Election is not an affirmation that some people were created for the purpose of receiving salvation, while others were created for God’s damnation. Such a position limits the grace of God by declaring that some people are beyond the power of God’s grace which is described as unlimited, Eph 1:7.
4. Election is not fatalism. If election rules out human choice then human beings created for damnation are beyond the ability of God to be saved, regardless of what they may do. If this view is followed then God has created some people to be evil and some to be good so choosing God for salvation becomes no choice at all but an unalterable decision made before one is born. This is a fatalism that is foreign to the Scripture and inconsistent with the character of God.

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