

## THE NATURE AND METHODS OF GOD'S ELECTIONS.

We have heretofore shown that election as taught in the Scriptures is not in opposition to, but in harmony with the free moral agency of the elected classes. We have endeavored to show, that while during the Jewish age there was an election or selection of a "house of servants," as during the present Christian age, an election or selection of a "house of sons" (Heb. 3:5,6) is in progress, yet neither of these selections was arbitrary so far as *individuals* were concerned. God did arbitrarily foreordain and determine that these two classes should be selected, and arbitrarily set apart a particular and limited period of time for the selection of each, and for aught we know to the contrary, He arbitrarily and unalterably fixed the number of each of these classes, so that not one more, nor one less, shall complete each of these elect classes, foreordained in this plan; but He did not and in harmony with His own justice He could not, arbitrarily foreordain and elect that certain individuals *must* be of these classes regardless of their wishes and endeavors, and regardless of the operations of His own arrangements and regulations governing these elections.

But before any are able to look at the subject of Election and Reprobation intelligently, they must first of all get rid of the false and blinding idea that election implies "selected to go to heaven" and reprobation, "selected to go to eternal torture." No such significance attaches in any way to the words. God not only applies justice to his creatures in the laws governing them, but He applies the same to himself; hence it would be as unjust and impossible for God to choose, select or elect an unworthy person to heaven as it would be for him to torture a righteous person. Furthermore, to be unchosen to a particular office or position does not imply that the unchosen one is wholly undesirable, but that he is not chosen to the particular office or position for which choice is being made.

Since God is good and all his plans are wise and beneficent, it follows that to be *selected* by Him to perform any part of His plan, is an honor and a favor. Thus God having purposed in himself the *redemption* of mankind from the curse, and the consequent lifting up, or restoring of all things, (Acts 3:19,21) not only foretold it, but began preparations for that restitution. Accordingly also having determined that this restitution should be accomplished by means of a "kingdom of God" or a government of earth in harmony with his laws, and having pre-determined that this kingdom should be of two parts, a human and a spiritual, He began His preparation by selecting first the natural or human portion, of the proposed, and as yet future kingdom.

Mark well that God foreordained these two classes, and the work for which he intended them, long before the individuals composing those classes had any existence. But how has this predetermined will of God operated in selecting the predetermined classes for the predetermined service of honor? Infinite wisdom made choice among the families of earth and chose Abraham and his family. Arbitrarily and without reason for such a choice? Probably not; in all probability Abram's family was best suited to the divine purpose, the best adapted to the execution of the plan God had in view.

It was part of Israel's difficulty that they supposed God's election of their nation an arbitrary election and thought it a sufficient guarantee of God's exclusive favor to be able to say, Abraham is our father – we are through him the elect people of God. (Luke 3:8.) But this was a mistake, for though God had chosen Abraham's family for a special service, and separated them by his law and favors from other nations, this was the extent of the favor they enjoyed – "To them were committed the oracles of God."

But by reason of this national favor, each individual of that nation had special knowledge and opportunities beyond those of other nations, and their faithfulness or unfaithfulness, obedience or disobedience to this knowledge and favor, *decided* which individuals of that called and

chosen and favored nation, were worthy of the position of future honor and service as members of the human or earthly phase, of the kingdom of God, which is to be established in ruling and blessing power "under the whole heavens."

Which individuals, because of faith and obedience, were accepted as making their election sure to that future honor and service, we know only in part. The names of some of the most notable only are given by the Apostle (Heb. 11:17-39). These evidenced their worthiness of the favors God held before them, by the sacrifices which they made of present honors and comforts, to obtain the future and lasting honors of heavenly promise. Therefore God will in due time honor them by manifesting them as his *elect* to the position and service to which he called them; and will give them a portion or share in the "heavenly city," *i.e.*, in the heavenly government or kingdom which he will establish; the portion promised them and to which they and all Israel were called or invited, but for which the great mass were unworthy. The great mass of that nation, unworthy of those honors, shall behold the worthy ones – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom, in the ruling positions of trust and honor, and they themselves cast out, as reprobates unworthy of such honor. Yet they are not to be cast off from all favor of God; rather they will be blessed by and under the righteous dominion which Christ will establish and in which their fellows are granted the earthly portion. They shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and be themselves rejected as unworthy of that honor.\*

\*Jesus does not mention himself and the Apostles as *seen* with Abraham and the prophets; because, though he and the Apostles and all the overcomers of the Christian age will be in and of that same kingdom, they will not be of the human phase or portion of it, but of the spiritual; and like angels invisible to mankind. Men will see only the earthly or human department of that glorious dominion.

The election of the full number for the human portion of the kingdom ended about the time of Jesus' baptism and anointing, when

he began to bring Life and Immortality to light. Then began the selection of the class which God had predetermined he would select from among men for exaltation to the "divine nature," and to constitute the spiritual phase of the kingdom which will restore and bless the world. Of these Jesus was the first, the "forerunner," the chief or captain. In the selection of this spiritual class Abraham's literal descendants, the Hebrews, have not been so exclusively favored as they were in the previous selection, for instead of the light of truth and "oracles of God" through which the call is made, being confined to Israel, it has by God's design and arrangement gone out into all the earth – calling all who have "an ear to hear" to justification, through faith in the blood of Christ as their redemption price, and further to sacrifice and glory – the "high calling." The only pre-eminence given to Hebrews under this last call, is that it *commenced* with them. (Luke 24:47.) The previous call was confined to them.

Nor should we overlook the fact that though in the process of selecting these two classes, certain individuals were elected or chosen to do a service in connection with the calling of these classes, this in no way implied their election to one of those classes. Thus Jacob like Abram was chosen to be a father of the favored nation and Moses, Samuel and others were chosen to a service in the first selection, as Paul and the other Apostles, and others since, have been chosen and selected for special service as God's agents in the selection of the spiritual class, yet their being elected to this service, was in no way an infringement upon their free moral agency, and in no way decided for them the question of their final election to the classes to which they were called.

Thus Paul, after telling us that God chose him and prepared him for this service in early life, (Gal. 1:15), also assures us, that he knew full well that the call to this service and the fact that he was used as a servant in announcing the "heavenly calling" to others, by no means proved that he would attain to the prize of his high calling.

To be called to such special service as Paul and the other apostles were called to, was a special honor which they must appreciate to use; and to have a call to the heavenly honor and future service is a still greater honor, and the worthiness of the apostles, and of all who will attain it, is, during this age, being tested by the measure of our love and gratitude to God; as shown in our obedience, and proved in our self-denials.

That Paul understood that obedience or unfaithfulness to the present opportunities, was to prove whether he was worthy or unworthy to be a member of the already elect, or predetermined spiritual class – the "body of Christ," is clearly evident from his many statements to this effect. For instance he says: "I keep my body under and bring it into subjection [I do not allow my human appetites, or ambitions, or hopes, to govern my course, but I permit the new mind, begotten of God's promises, to rule], lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, [of the great prize for which we run and sacrifice], I myself should be a castaway+ [rejected as unworthy a place in that choice company which God has predetermined shall be composed of "*overcomers*"] 1 Cor. 9:27. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended [or *grasped* the prize to which God called me, and for which I, with you, am running]; but ...I press along the line towards the mark for the prize of the high calling." – (Phil. 3:11-15.) And in the preceding verses he tells us in what way he was running or pressing along the line to win this great prize which God has already predetermined to give to the class whom he would select for it. He tells us that he was casting away former hopes, and ambitions, and honors, as though they were worthless and vile, and spending every effort to win a place in the body of Christ, and to secure a share in the *chief* resurrection [to spiritual being].

+ "Castaway" here is from the same Greek word elsewhere rendered "reprobate," and signifies *rejected* – not accepted.

He well knew that, because redeemed, "all in their graves" would in due time "come forth;" but he knew, too, that only the elect "little

flock" would be raised spiritual beings like their Captain and forerunner; and he was willing to sacrifice everything (as Christ also did) to obtain a place in that elect class. The apostle knew also that from the moment of consecration he was *reckoned* a member of that chosen "body" or "bride" of Christ, and that his name was "written in heaven" (Heb. 12:23); and though he had full assurance of faith each moment, because of full knowledge that he was daily a living sacrifice, yet he also knew that for him to turn back, or even to "look back," (or desire to recover that which he had sacrificed), would prove him unworthy of the kingdom position. He well knew that he who wrote his name in heaven when he consecrated and started to run, could blot it out; and that the condition upon which it would not be blotted out was, *faithfulness to the end of the race*. (Rev. 3:5.) And not until his faithful course was closing with martyrdom did he write, "I *have* fought a good fight; I have *finished* my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up [reserved securely] for me, a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." – 2 Tim. 4:7,8.

Yet, while remembering that God has made the deciding of the matter, whether or not we shall be members of the elect company to which he called us, to depend upon our faithfulness to the end – "unto death" – we should ever bear in mind, as Paul did, that the prize is not offered to us because of our worthiness of it, but of God's grace or favor. And that our running is acceptable only because of God's "*mercy*" in imputing to us the merits of Christ, our Redeemer, as the covering of our inherited weaknesses and imperfections. – Rom. 9:16.

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