

## WHAT SHOULD WE UNDERSTAND ABOUT "ELECTION" AND THE "ELECT"?

"Election" is one of the more divisive subjects among Christians. Because of the influence of Calvinistic teaching in many seminaries, church pulpits, radio broadcasts, and the like, many people equate "election" with salvation. "Election," in a Calvinistic influenced mind, immediately thinks that God has "elected" some to be saved (also referred to as "particular redemption"). But, in fact, is this the use of the term "elect" in the Bible? "Election" is a biblical doctrine and, because it is, we should attempt to understand what the Bible says about "election."

### USE OF ELECTION, ELECT, CHOSEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

*Elect (eklektos)* is found 16 times in the New Testament  
*Chosen (eklektos)* is found 7 times in the New Testament

*Elected* (together with), *suneklektos*, is used 1 time in the New Testament

*Chosen or chose (eklegomai)* is used 20 times in the New Testament

*Election (ekloge)* is found 6 times in the New Testament  
*Chosen (ekloge)* is found 1 time in the New Testament

These words are used a total of 51 times in the New Testament

All references to *election*, *elect*, and *chosen* in the N.T. has to do with believers, never unbelievers.

The exceptions are one of the terms being used once for angels, once for the poor, once for making the correct choice, once for choosing a room, and three times of Jesus.

**ELECTION IS USED OF MANY DIFFERENT ENTITIES IN THE BIBLE** (It is also used of Jerusalem, 2 Chronicles 6:6; and weak and foolish things, speaking of believers, 1 Corinthians 1:27-28.)

#### 1) ANGELS

"I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality." 1 Timothy 5:21

Angels don't benefit in the saving work of Jesus. They are "elect" because they are the unfallen angels.

#### 2) CHRIST

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." Isaiah 42:1

"Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles." Matthew 12:18

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious," 1 Peter 2:4

The meaning of *elect* or *chosen* in reference to Christ obviously has nothing to do with His being saved but has to do with 1) **His BELOVEDNESS** and 2) **His WORK**.

#### 3) JEWISH BELIEVERS IN THE TRIBULATION PERIOD

Matthew 24:22	And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.
23	Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.
24	For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

"Elect" is clearly speaking of a group in this case. "Elect" can be understood as a title and certainly is not referring to salvation.

#### 4) THE TWELVE DISCIPLES

Luke 6:13 and when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.

"Chose" in this usage can't mean to salvation, as one of them was Judas. They were "chosen" to serve.

#### 5) PAUL

Acts 9:15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.

Paul is "chosen" to "bear my name before the Gentiles." This is a unique case and speaks "chosen" for service.

## 6) ISRAEL

### CHOSEN

Isaiah 41:8-9 But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.

"O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen." Psalm 105: 6

"And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness." Psalm 105:43

"That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance." Psalm 106:5

"Central to the Hebraic concept of community is the idea of corporate personality. This concept means that the individual was always thought of in the collective (family, tribe, nation) and the collective in the individual. This corporate solidarity was reinforced by the fact that the entire community (past ancestors and future members) was viewed as one personality, 'a living whole, a single animated mass of blood, flesh and bones.'" Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*, page 187

"Divine election in its basic Old Testament form is collective, corporate, national. It encompasses a community of which the individual Israelite is an integral part." James Daane, *The Freedom of God*

"The Old Testament data concerning God's election naturally leads to a major conclusion - *election is primarily a corporate concept*. The election of the priesthood puts this in bold relief. God chose the priests as a category, but individual Levites could be disqualified. The Davidic dynasty certainly follows this pattern. Though 'election' can apply to individuals, more frequently it applies to the election of corporate groups. In fact, the scattered references to elect individuals find their significance in the context of the election of the community."

William Klein, *The New Chosen People; A Corporate View of Election*, page 35

"To Israelite thought, which in this connection is quite in harmony with Semitic thought in general and also has parallels outside the Semitic world, unity is prior to diversity, the community prior to the individual; the real entity is the community, and the individuals belonging to it have their origin therein." Eissfeldt quoted by William Klein, *The New Chosen People; A Corporate View of Election*, pg. 36

### AS THE BELOVED (FOR SERVICE)

With Israel's election came: **1) BELOVEDNESS** and **2) SERVICE (WORK)**

#### BELOVED

"And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt." Deuteronomy 4:37

Deuteronomy 7:6-8      6      For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.  
7      The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:  
8      But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

"Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day." Deuteronomy 10:15

#### SERVICE (with election come responsibilities)

Deuteronomy 4:39      Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.  
40      Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever.  
Deuteronomy 7:11      Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.  
12      Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers:

Deuteronomy 10:12 And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,  
 13 To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?  
 14 Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.  
 15 Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.

"Israel's election by God was clearly corporate...; it was for service."

C. Gordon Olson, *Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism*, pg. 193-94

"In the national election of Israel several ideas are in view: service, choice and blessing...the initial purpose of the election was that Israel as a nation might be a channel of blessing to the whole earth."

John F. Parkinson, *The Faith of God's Elect*, page 20

"The concept of corporate solidarity is not only essential to the cultures into which the Old Testament came, but is an essential component of the Old Testament itself. Corporate solidarity is still today integral to Asian and African cultures. With our strong emphasis upon individualism, this has been lost in our western cultures. It is not surprising that the notion of individual election to salvation arose in the western, Latin church and is totally absent from eastern Christianity. The Greek churches, which presumably understood Greek better, have no concept of individual election."

C. Gordon Olson, *Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism*, pg. 193-94

## 7) CHURCH

Christ and His finished work is the basis for corporate solidarity in the Church. We are chosen and accepted in Him.

"According as he hath **chosen us in him** before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Ephesians 1:4 [bold emphasis added]

The context of Ephesians 1 is believers are being addressed:

- 1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:
- 2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ

Notice who are being addressed in this chapter:

Verse 1, "to the saints," "to the faithful in Christ Jesus."

Verse 2, "grace to you [the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus]."

Verse 3, "hath blessed us [the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus]."

Verse 4, "hath chosen us [the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus]," "that we [the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus]."

"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us [the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus] **accepted in the beloved.**" Ephesians 1:6 [bold emphasis added]

With the Church's election come the same two things as Israel's election:

### 1) BELOVEDNESS

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering." Colossians 3:12

### 2) SERVICE (WORK)

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Ephesians 1:4

"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus 2:14

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10

-- 3) **CORPORATE SOLIDARITY SHOULD BE A PRIORITY OF A BELIEVER'S LIFE**

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

● **The Body of Christ**

**Verse 12**

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: **so also is Christ**" [bold added]

"In order to accomplish his work on earth, Jesus had a body made of flesh and blood. In order to accomplish his work today, Jesus has a body that consists of living human beings."

Arnold Bittlenger, *Gifts and Graces*, pg. 55 quoted by David Prior in *The Message of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians*, pg. 210

"The apostle makes this observation, 'so also is Christ.' He links the body to Christ. We are members of Christ when we are members of the body. We function through Christ when we function in the body. There is a grand and imposing unity in the whole Christian system of life. Let us understand it and we shall live and labor more effectively." Roy Laurin, *First Corinthians: Where Life Matures*, pg. 209

● **The body has priority over the individual**

**Verses 13 -14**

Your relation to the community of believers, the body, is more important than your individual life. This is one of the reasons why biblical discipline, for example, is necessary and vital.

● **Each individual is important and necessary to the body**

**Verses 15 - 17**

● **Functioning properly in the church (the body) glorifies Jesus**

**Verses 18 - 26**

● **The body has priority over the individual**

**Verse 27**

The closing thought is the same as the introductory thought in this passage.

Individuals, first and foremost, represent the community of believers, the church, in their actions and activities. Yes, they are an individual, but biblically, their individualism is subservient to the church, the body of Christ.

"This brings us to consider the whole construct of 'corporate solidarity' that is so foreign to our Western thinking. In his book *The New Testament World*, Bruce Malina argues persuasively that the first-century Mediterranean person did not share or comprehend our idea of an individual. Malina is convinced that instead of being individualistic, in the world of the New Testament, people were what he calls 'dyadic.' That is, they conceived of themselves in relation to others, not as separate entities. Thus they did not view people in terms of their specific qualities as individuals, but rather the qualities of their family, village, city, or nation."

William Klein, *The New Chosen People: A Corporate View of Election*, pg. 260

"The prime point is that the election of the church is a corporate rather than an individual thing."

Paul Marston and Roger Forster, *God's Strategy in Human History*, pg. 137

"Keep in mind then that election is 'IN CHRIST.' We are not among the elect until we come into Christ by repentance and faith. Remember too that election is collective - the Church. It is only when individuals come into the church by simple faith in Christ that they become part of God's elect. Election is not to go anywhere, either to heaven or to hell, but to be something and to fulfill a mission and perform a task."

Robert McClurkin, *Election & Freewill in Biblical Balance on Election and Freewill*, pg. 40

"In summary, we see that the consistent apostolic and early church teaching was that Christians are chosen only in and through Christ. There is never any hint that they were chosen to be put into Christ. Rather, as members of his body they share in his election."

Paul Marston and Roger Forster, *God's Strategy in Human History*, pg. 157

## **CONCLUSION**

After detailing the different 'elections' in the New Testament (Christ, Church in Christ, Nation of Israel, believers within the nation of Israel, the twelve disciples, and Paul) Marston and Forster make the following comment:

"What did the New Testament writers mean to convey by the word *eklektos*? The primary idea...seems to be that God has bestowed an office. Today we tend to think of 'election' as implying unmerited privilege. This may, of course, have been implied - for it is a privilege to hold an office. Nevertheless, the main idea of the New Testament seems to be one of responsibility and a task to perform. In this sense it seems to be close to the concept of a 'calling' or vocation. God bestows an office, and with it he also gives a 'name' or 'calling' to the agent concerned."

Paul Marston and Roger Forster, *God's Strategy in Human History*, page 134

"First, the scriptural expression 'God's elect', is not the mere statement of a fact, or even of a purpose, but, like 'first-born', it is a title of dignity and privilege, applicable exclusively to the Christian. And secondly, the prominent thought in election, especially in this dispensation of the Church (as the word *ecclesia* suggests), is rank and privilege, and not deliverance from perdition." Sir Robert Anderson, *The Gospel and It's Ministry*, Page 76