

PREDETERMINATION

1. Key words on the doctrine of predetermination are:

- a. ὁρίζω: “to make a determination about an entity, *determine, appoint, fix, set*” (BDAG, 723).
 - (1) **Ac 11:29** 29 So the disciples determined (ὁρίζω. aor. act.), every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers and sisters living in Judea.
 - (2) In the New Testament, this term is used of God and man.
- b. προορίζω: “decide upon beforehand, *predetermine*” (BDAG, 873).
 - (1) In the New Testament, this term is always used only of God.
- c. Say predetermined, not predestined.
 - (1) The term “predestination” sounds too much like the pagan concept of destiny or fate. To avoid confusion, it’s better to use the terms “predetermination” or “decide beforehand.” These terms clarify the biblical concept it is the personal God of the Bible who is making decisions beforehand. God’s predetermination in eternity past based on foreknowledge is far different from impersonal destiny or fate.

2. Only three biblical references relate predetermination to salvation.

- a. These are Ro 8:29-30 and Eph 1:5, 11-12.
- b. Of the twelve New Testament references to predetermination, three have to do with Jesus’ death, two with his resurrection, two with his appointment as judge, one with God’s determination of our places of habitation, three with believers, and one with social help.¹

3. Under Calvinism, God predetermines everything with no reference to anything outside of himself.

- a. “The movement of every molecule, the actions of every plant, the falling of every star, the choice of every volitional creature, all of these are the subject of his sovereign will. No maverick molecules run loose in the universe beyond the control of the Creator. If one such molecule existed, it could be the critical fly in the eternal ointment.”²
- b. The Calvinistic view of predestination is appropriately characterised as:
 - (1) Arbitrary.
 - (2) Theistic determinism.
- c. Compatibilism is the biblical alternative to Calvinism.



4. God pre-decided many things in eternity past.

- a. God formed plans of old.
 - (1) **Is 25:1** 1 Yahweh, you are my God. I will exalt you. I will praise your name, for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure.

¹ J. Lennox, *Determined to Believe?*, 112.

² R. C. Sproul, *What Is Reformed Theology?* (Baker, 2016), 172.

- (2) **Mt 13:35** 35 This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet: I will open my mouth in parables. I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.
- b. God fixed times and seasons by his own authority.
- (1) **Ac 1:7** 7 [Jesus] said to [the apostles], It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed (τίθημι, aor.) by his own authority.
- c. God determined our fixed periods and geographical boundaries.
- (1) **Ac 17:26-27** 26 ...[God] made from one man every nation of humanity to live on all the face of the earth, having determined (ὀρίζω, aor.) fixed (προστάσσω, perf. pass.)³ periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, 27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us....
- d. God planned for his Son, Jesus, to be delivered up, crucified, and killed.
- (1) **Ac 2:23** 23 ...This Jesus, delivered up as determined (ὀρίζω, perf. pass.) by the plan (βουλή) and foreknowledge (πρόγνωσις) of God, you crucified and killed. (aor. act. ind.) by the hands of lawless men.
- (2) **Ac 4:27-28** 27 ...For truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever your hand and your plan (βουλή) had predetermined (προορίζω, aor. act.)⁴ to take place.
- e. God predetermined believers for adoption to himself.
- (1) **Eph 1:3-6** 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Messiah, who has blessed us in Messiah with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world [election], that we should be holy and blameless before him [sanctification]. In love 5 he predetermined (προορίζω, aor.) us [predetermination] for adoption to himself as sons [justification] through Jesus Messiah, according to the good pleasure (εὐδοκία) of his desire (θέλημα), 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.
- f. God predetermined a secret and hidden wisdom for the Church age.
- (1) **1 Co 2:7** 7 We [apostles] impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God predetermined (προορίζω, aor.) before the ages for our glory.
- (2) **Eph 3:9-11** 9 ...And to bring to light for everyone what is the plan (οἰκονομία) of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was according to the eternal purpose (πρόθεσις) that he has realised in Messiah Jesus our Lord....
- (3) **2 Ti 1:9-10** 9 ...Who saved us and [specially] called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own [predetermined] purpose and grace, which he gave us in Messiah Jesus before the ages began, 10 and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Messiah Jesus....

³ “[T]o issue an official directive or make a determination, *command, order, give instructions, determine*” (BDAG, 884).

⁴ “[D]ecide upon beforehand, *predetermine*” (BDAG, 873).

- (4) **Ti 1:1-3** 1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Messiah, for the sake of the faith of God's elect [election] and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, 2 in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began [predetermination] 3 and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior....
- g. God prepared good works for us to walk in.
(1) **Eph 2:10** 10 ...We are his workmanship, created in Messiah Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand (προετοιμάζω, aor. act.), that we should walk in them.
- h. God fixed a day on which he will judge the world.
(1) **Ac 17:30-31** 30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to change their minds, 31 because he has fixed (ἵστημι, aor.) a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed (ὀρίζω, aor.). And of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.
- i. God determined Jesus will be the judge of humanity.
(1) **Ac 10:42** 42 ...He commanded us [apostles] to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one determined (ὀρίζω, perf. pass.) by God to be judge of the living and the dead.
- j. God prepared a kingdom for believers.
(1) **Mt 25:34** 34 ...The King will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.
- k. In one sense, God's works were finished from the foundation of the world.
(1) **Heb 4:3** 3 ...Although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.
- l. See *God's Plan*.

5. God's predetermined plan makes prophecy possible.

- a. **Is 42:9** 9 Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare. Before they spring forth I tell you of them.
- b. **Is 46:9-11** 9 Remember the former things of old. For I am God, and there is no other. I am God, and there is none like me, 10 declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.... 11 I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass. I have purposed, and I will do it.
- c. **Jn 13:19** 19 I [Jesus] am telling you [disciples] this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I Am.
- d. **Jn 14:29** 29 And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe.
- e. **Jn 16:4** 4 But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.

6. God's predetermination is based on his foreknowledge.

- a. **Ro 8:29-30** 29 For those whom [God] foreknew he also predetermined (προορίζω, aor.) to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn

among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predetermined (προορίζω, aor.) he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

(1) In eternity past, God predetermined that believers would be conformed to the image of his Son.

- b. **Ac 2:23** 23 ...This Jesus, delivered up as determined (ὀρίζω, perf. pass.) by the plan (βουλή) and foreknowledge (πρόγνωσις) of God, you crucified and killed (aor. act. ind.) by the hands of lawless men.

7. God's predetermination respects angelic and human free will.

- a. In eternity past, God determined what actions he would take in response to the actions his free will creatures would take. For example:

(1) He knew who would respond positively or negatively to his general call.
(2) He knew what prayers we would pray and determined how he would answer.
(3) He knew what sins we would commit and what divine discipline he would inflict.

- b. **Ac 17:26-27** 26 ...[God] made from one man every nation of humanity to live on all the face of the earth, having determined (ὀρίζω, aor.) fixed (προστάσσω, perf. pass.)⁵ periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, 27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us....

(1) God has determined our periods and boundaries. We decide whether we will seek God.

- c. **Ac 17:30-31** 30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to change their minds, 31 because he has fixed (ἵστημι, aor.) a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed (ὀρίζω, aor.). And of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

(1) God has fixed a judgment day. We decide whether we will change our minds.

- d. God actualised the world we are living in based on his foreknowledge of what we would do if given the opportunity to live in his world. See *Foreknowledge*.

8. God more actively predetermined a general plan. He less actively predetermined specifics within that general plan.

- a. God definitely would deliver the Jews in Mordecai's day. That was part of his grand plan. There was no way God would allow the Jews to be destroyed. However, would that deliverance come through Esther or someone else? Esther had to decide.

(1) **Es 4:13-14** 13 Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

- b. Jesus definitely had to die on a cross as a substitute for the sin of humanity. But Judas did not have to be the one to betray Jesus.

⁵ “[T]o issue an official directive or make a determination, *command, order, give instructions, determine*” (BDAG, 884).

- (1) **Lk 22:22** 22 ...The Son of Man goes as it has been determined (ὀρίζω, perf. pass.),⁶ but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!
- c. Jesus had to be crucified, but individual Jews and Romans did not have to be involved.
- (1) **Ac 2:23** 23 ...This Jesus, delivered up as determined (ὀρίζω, perf. pass.) by the plan (βουλή) and foreknowledge (πρόγνωσις) of God, you crucified and killed (aor. act. ind.) by the hands of lawless men.
- (2) **Ac 4:27-28** 27 ...For truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever your hand and your plan (βουλή) had predetermined (προορίζω, aor. act.)⁷ to take place.
- d. God has set the periods and boundaries of the nations, but individuals decide whether they will seek God and feel their way toward him.
- (1) **Ac 17:26-27** 26 ...[God] made from one man every nation of humanity to live on all the face of the earth, having determined (ὀρίζω, aor.) fixed (προστάσσω, perf. pass.)⁸ periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, 27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us....

9. Based on foreknowledge, God prepared unbelievers for destruction and believers for glory.

- a. **Ro 9:22-24** 22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared (καταρτίζω, perf. pass.)⁹ for destruction, 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand (προετοιμάζω, aor. act.)¹⁰ for glory— 24 even us whom he has [specially] called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?
- b. **Jud 4** 4 ...Certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Messiah.
- c. **Re 13:8** 8 ...All who dwell on earth will worship [the beast], everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

10. God's predetermination is like a book that has already been written.

- a. **Ps 139:16** 16 Your eyes saw my unformed substance. In your book were written every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

⁶ “[T]o make a determination about an entity, *determine, appoint, fix, set*” (BDAG, 723).

⁷ “[D]ecide upon beforehand, *predetermine*” (BDAG, 873).

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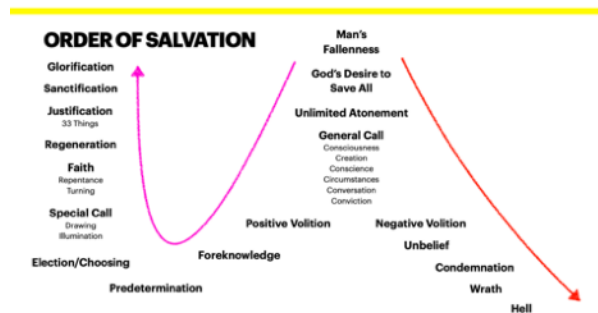
⁹ “[T]o prepare for a purpose, prepare, make, create, outfit” (BDAG, 526).

¹⁰ “[P]repare beforehand” (BDAG, 869).

- b. **Ma 3:16-18** 16 Then those who feared Yahweh spoke with one another. Yahweh paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared Yahweh and esteemed his name. 17 They shall be mine, says Yahweh of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. 18 Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.
- c. **Re 13:8** 8 ...All who dwell on earth will worship [the beast], everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

11. God elects and specially calls based on foreknowledge and predetermination.

- a. **Ro 8:29-30** 29 For those whom [God] foreknew he also predetermined (προορίζω, aor.) to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predetermined (προορίζω, aor.) he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.



- b. **Ro 9:22-24** 22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared (καταρτίζω, perf. pass.)¹¹ for destruction, 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand (προετοιμάζω, aor. act.)¹² for glory— 24 even us whom he has [specially] called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?
- c. **Eph 1:3-6** 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Messiah, who has blessed us in Messiah with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world [election], that we should be holy and blameless before him [sanctification]. In love 5 he predetermined (προορίζω, aor.) us [predetermination] for adoption to himself as sons [justification] through Jesus Messiah, according to the good pleasure (εὐδοκία) of his desire (θέλημα), 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.
- d. **2 Ti 1:9-10** 9 ...Who saved us and [specially] called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own [predetermined] purpose and grace, which he

¹¹ “[T]o prepare for a purpose, prepare, make, create, outfit” (BDAG, 526).

¹² “[P]repare beforehand” (BDAG, 869).

gave us in Messiah Jesus before the ages began, 10 and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Messiah Jesus....

- e. **Ti 1:1-3** 1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Messiah, for the sake of the faith of God's elect [election] and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, 2 in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began [predetermination] 3 and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior....

12. God's predetermination of believers accords with his grace.

- a. **Eph 1:4-6** 4 In love 5 [God] predetermined (προορίζω, aor.) us for adoption to himself as sons [justification] through Jesus Messiah, according to the good pleasure (εὐδοκία) of his desire (θέλημα), 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.
- b. **Eph 1:11** 11 In [Jesus] we have obtained an inheritance, having been predetermined (προορίζω, aor. pass.) according to the purpose (πρόθεσις)¹³ of [God] who works all things according to the counsel (βουλή)¹⁴ of his desire (θέλημα)....

Videos

Soteriology 101, "Why Calvinistic Predestination Isn't Biblical."



¹³ "[T]hat which is planned in advance, *plan, purpose, resolve, will*" (BDAG, 869).

¹⁴ "[T]hat which one thinks about as possibility for action, *plan, purpose, intention*... that which one decides, *resolution, decision*" (BDAG, 181).