

OCCASIONAL NOTES

Strangers Rest Evangelical Church

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Predestination

“Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself:
but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.”

(Psalm 50:21)

By Mark Mullins

A correct understanding of predestination is essential to a right understanding of God himself which leads on to a right understanding of the Gospel. I have been a Christian for nearly 37 years, yet it is only over the past 18 months or so that I have come to grasp its importance. Of course predestination itself merely means that an event has been appointed in the future and will certainly happen. We have all heard others say, if we have not said it ourselves, that “we were destined to meet”. That means no more than the particular meeting referred to had been planned by some unseen hand before it happened.

A Definition

Jerome Zanchius (1516-1590), in his book *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, defined predestination as follows:

That eternal, most wise and immutable decree of God, whereby He did from before all time determine and ordain to create, dispose of and direct to some particular end every

person and thing to which He has given, or is yet to give, being, and to make the whole creation subservient to and declarative of His own glory.

Prophecy and Predestination: Christ's Incarnation

On one level the predestination of events in the Bible should be uncontroversial for Christians. Around Christmas churches up and down the land will read prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, written centuries before His birth such as Isaiah 9:6:- “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

Even the place of His birth was predicted many years before it happened showing that this event was predestined to happen in Micah 5:2:- “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”

Prophecy and Predestination: Christ's Death and Resurrection

The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ were predicted to happen both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament:

1. Isaiah 53:6-9:- “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he



opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth;"

2. The manner of the Lord Jesus's crucifixion is set out in great detail in Psalm 22; and
3. The Lord Jesus predicted His death and resurrection when He said in Mark 9:31: "The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day."

The Second Coming of the Lord Jesus is also predicted to happen by the Lord Jesus and the prophets:-

1. Jude 1:14:- "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."
2. Daniel 7:13:- "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people and nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

3. Matthew 24:30- "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

Prophecy and Predestination: Other Examples

Not only are there prophecies about the first and second coming of the Lord Jesus but there are prophecies about the rise of the Anti-Christ system within Roman Catholicism, most notably in Revelation 17 and 2 Thessalonians 2.

There are also prophecies about the future of Israel such as Luke 21:24:- "and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

So we can see that there are events that are predetermined to happen. If they were not then it would be impossible to predict them. It is rather like a book. My father had a habit of always reading the end of a book before he began. I must admit that I like to know there is a happy ending before I read a book of fiction (of which I read very few indeed). The point is that you can't know the end of a story before it has been written.

For the Bible to prophesy events which are yet to take place including the end of the world then those events must already have been determined. If not then biblical prophecy would be as unreliable as reading your star signs. Yet we know that what is written in the Bible is true and more reliable than anything else in this world. Thus we read in Isaiah 40:7:- "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever." Also the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 24:35:- "Heaven and earth may pass away: but my words shall not pass away."

The Author of Prophecy

How is it then that the Bible can so accurately predict world events? We know that in Isaiah 46:9-10, the Lord said: "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done,

saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my good pleasure.”

Now this is quite a statement. First we see the absolute sovereignty and supremacy of the God of the Bible: “I am God, and there is none else” (Isaiah 45:5); “I am God and there is none like me” (Isaiah 46:9). God is without any parallel; no being can compare with the greatness of our God. And why is that? We see in the following phrase: because (1) He declares the end from the beginning. Not only does He know the end from the beginning but He declares it. There is no other book in the whole of this world that declares the future like the Bible. It has never got anything wrong and it never will. There is no other book that has ever done that because there is no God like our God!

Then (2) declaring from ancient times the things that are not yet done. This is a restatement of the previous declaration: He has declared from ancient times the things that are not yet done. The Old Testament prophets declared the future because they were shown the future, just as Amos said would happen in Amos 3:7:- “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”

God’s Revelation to the Prophets

Prophets are told the future by God. They have no control over it. They are seers only – by the Spirit of God they are able to look into the future and to foretell events. However, God is so much greater than the prophets. Amos 3:7 tells us that God reveals to the prophets, not merely the future, but the events that God will do.

This tells us that when He reveals the future to His prophets He is telling them what He is going to do! Now the previous verse gives us a hint of the extent of the Lord’s supremacy over the events of history: “shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?” (Amos 3:6) What sort of evil things happen in our city? There is one obvious one we are contending with at the moment: Coronavirus. It is an evil. It is a silent killer stalking our streets, our schools, our universities, our work places and even our homes. Who has sent it? Amos 3:6 tells us: it is God that has sent it!

Is there such a thing as Chance?

It is not just that God sends evil into a city. God is sovereign over every event that takes place in this world. Are you thinking, surely there is such a thing as chance or random events that God has no control over? Ecclesiastes 9:11 says this:- “I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.”

However, what is chance to man is not chance to God. Consider the apparently chance event when Ahab was killed by an arrow that was shot “at a venture” (1 Kings 22:34). The arrow happened to pierce between the joints of the harness that the king was wearing and the wound proved fatal. In 1 Kings 22:20 we read: “And the Lord said, who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead?” From this we know that Ahab’s death was not a chance event because God had already decided that his death would take place on that battlefield. God intended that the arrow, shot at a venture, should kill Ahab.

The Casting of a Lot

Another event open to chance is the casting of a lot. Yet in Proverbs 16:33 we read: “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord”. Now we are not to take that as a justification to cast lots in order to make decisions except in circumstances where there is no other biblical way of resolving the issue. The point is that God directs even the result of a random event such as the casting of a lot. Hence, the culprit who brought defeat on the people of Israel at Ai was discovered by the casting of a lot (Joshua 7:14); the fishermen discovered that Jonah was responsible for the storm that was on the point of destroying them all (Jonah 1:7); the disciples, without any other way of making a final decision, used the casting of a lot to choose Matthias in Judas’s place (Acts 1:26).

Apparently Unimportant Events



We see another example of God's sovereignty demonstrated in the most obscure and unimportant events in Matthew 10:29:- "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." This verse is not just saying that the Lord knows about the death or the wounding of a sparrow but that the

event is decreed by God to happen. And so the 18th century Baptist theologian, Dr John Gill, wrote that, despite the inferiority of a sparrow whose worth to man is reflected in their price, yet "the providence of God is concerned with each of these; so that not one of them is taken in a snare, or killed with a stone, or shot flying, or sitting, but by the will of God: from whence it may be strongly concluded, that nothing comes by chance; that there is no such thing as contingency with respect to God." In other words, God is not dependent on anything else happening for His will to be done.

God Orders the Heart of Man

Even the acts of men are ordered by the Lord and so in Proverbs 21:1 Solomon wrote:- "The King's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." If God turns even a king's heart then is there any heart that He does not turn according to His will? Four examples of God turning the hearts of kings illustrate the point:

1. God hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he would not let the people of Israel go (Exodus 7:13,14; 10:20,27 and 11:10).
2. God answered the prayers of Queen Esther, her uncle Mordecai and the Jews who were present in Shushan and gave Esther favour in the sight of king Ahasuerus when she stood before him (Esther 5:2);
3. The night before the wicked Haman was going to ask the king to hang Mordecai, the Lord caused the king to have a sleepless night. The king ordered the bringing of the records of the chronicles to the king's where

he happened to read that Mordecai had reported the treachery of Bigthana and Teresh who had plotted to kill him. This meant that the king's heart was inclined towards Mordecai which completely thwarted Haman's plans;

4. God granted Nehemiah favour in the eyes of King Artaxerxes when his appearance was sad before the king. In Nehemiah 2:4, Nehemiah wrote: "So I prayed to the God of heaven". It was an arrow prayer that God heard because the King gave Nehemiah permission to return to Jerusalem to rebuild its walls.

The Sovereignty of God in All Things

That God controls and is sovereign over everything is confirmed in a number of scriptures including the following:

1. Psalm 115:2-3:- "Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God? But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased;"
2. Nebuchadnezzar's testimony in Daniel 4:35:- "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"

Nothing and no one can stay the hand of God or even question it. In Matthew 11:25-26 the Lord Jesus says the same things:-

"At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."

Why has God withheld these things from the "wise and prudent", and revealed them unto babes? Because it is good in His sight.

God Overrules Evil

God even overrules the wicked designs of men for His purpose as we see in Psalm 2:1-4:- "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel

together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.”

A classic example of God’s overruling evil is in the life of Joseph towards the end of Genesis. As Joseph revealed himself to his brothers and told them of the extraordinary way that God had worked in his life, he turned to his brothers and said, “So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God...” (Genesis 45:8). From the human standpoint it was Joseph’s brothers who had sent him to Egypt by selling him to Arab traders yet Joseph said, “it was not you that sent me hither, but God.” These sinful actions came under the eternal plan of God. Isn’t that extraordinarily comforting when something terrible happens? Think of how Joseph could have responded. He could so easily have blamed his brothers for a wasted life away from his father but he chose to see God’s overruling hand of providence in these events.

Our Response to God’s Sovereignty

Joseph’s example provides a challenge to us to do the same when we are confronted with similarly difficult circumstances which seem to be completely out of our control – or alternatively – and I think this is important, even when they are *within* our control. Joseph had behaved unwisely towards his brothers and must have kicked himself as a result. We can sometimes act unwisely and find ourselves reaping most unexpected and unwanted harvests for our troubles – yet we see God has overruled. We must not be those who look back in regret – a good verse is 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 where worldly sorrow and godly repentance are contrasted. We must never say, “if only”! We must, instead, be thankful for the mercies that we are still enjoying.

Man’s Responsibility

It is important to note, though, that just because God overrules the evil intentions of mankind for good, that does not absolve mankind from its responsibility for behaving with an evil motive. Consider Peter’s description of the crucifixion in Acts 2:23:- “Him being

delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain”. Those wicked men will have to stand at the judgment seat of Christ to explain themselves. Remember what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:6-8:- “Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory. Which none of the princes of the world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

Consider also Peter’s description in Acts 4:27-28:- “For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, against thy holy child Jesus, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together” and notice the next part – “for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.” The terrible sin of those men was determined beforehand by God.

The Purpose of God

Returning to our verse in Isaiah 46:10, we go on to read: “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my good pleasure”. The Hebrew word translated as ‘counsel’ can also mean purpose. In other words, “My purpose shall stand.” God’s purpose will stand! God is working out everything according to a plan. Do you remember the hymn: “God is working his purpose out, as year succeeds to year, God is working his purpose out and the time is drawing near: nearer and nearer draws the time, the time that shall surely be, when the earth shall be filled with the glory of God, as the waters cover the sea.” The great joy for the believer is to be part of that Plan.

The Eternal Plan of God

We have established that God is working to a plan in His universe and He will do His good pleasure. Now, here is a question for us. If God is working to a plan, when was that plan made? The simple answer is that if the Lord knows the end from the beginning then He must always have known His plan and so His plan must have been made before He made the world! This is clearly expressed in Acts 15:18:- “**Known unto**

God are all his works from the beginning of the world." Everything that God does in the world has been planned beforehand. This means that God's works of providence were planned in eternity past by what is known as God's decrees.

We must remember that God is not a man that He changes His mind. His purposes, His determinate counsel and promises are steadfast. We see this in a number of scriptures:

- Numbers 23:19 – "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"
- I Samuel 15:29 – "And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent."
- Job 23:13 – "But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth."
- Psalm 33:11 – "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever; the thoughts of his heart to all generations".
- Ezekiel 24:14 – "I the Lord have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord God."
- Romans 11:29 – "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."
- 2 Timothy 2:13 – "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself."

This means that everything that God intends will happen for, as we read in Romans 9:19:- "Who hath resisted his will"? Or as David puts it in

Psalm 33:10:- "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect."

Does God Change his Mind?

But what about those scriptures where we read that God repented? For example He had told Jonah that if Nineveh did not repent then the city would be destroyed in forty days. Yet the people did repent and we read in in Jonah 3:10 that "God repented of the evil, that he had said he would do unto them; and he did it not".

Some of those reading these Occasional Notes will recall the article I wrote on Divine Impassibility where I sought to show from scripture that such places in scripture where God appears to change His mind are what theologians describe as anthropopathisms. That is God condescending to speak to us human beings by attributing human feelings to non-humans, in this case to God.

So we interpret Jonah 3:10 to mean that God never intended to destroy Nineveh. However, by issuing the warning He caused the change in the people that He always intended. So Thomas Watson wrote: "A king may cause sentence to be passed upon a malefactor whom he intends to save; so God threatened destruction to Nineveh, but the people of Nineveh repenting, God spared them. Jonah 3: 10. Here God changed his sentence, but not his decree; it was what had lain in the womb of his purpose from eternity."¹

God's Revealed Will and His Secret Will

So this means that God's will is always done! Yet, you might ask, why then are we commanded by the Lord Jesus Himself in the Lord's Prayer, to pray "Thy will be done", if God's Will is always done? To answer this question we have to distinguish between God's revealed will and His secret will. God's revealed will is our duty. It was God's revealed will that Adam and Eve should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden and so it became their duty not to eat from the tree. Yet it was God's secret will that they should eat it because they did eat it and they

¹ A Body of Divinity: Contained in Sermons upon the Westminster Assembly's Catechism (pp. 61-62).

could not have done that if it had not been decreed by God that they should.

It was God's revealed will to Abraham that he should sacrifice Isaac. In other words, it was Abraham's duty to intend to sacrifice Isaac because God had told him to but it was **not** God's secret will (which He hadn't told Abraham) that He should. It would have been no excuse for Abraham to have refused to do God's revealed will (i.e. his duty) on the basis that it was God's secret will that Isaac should live for he would not have known God's secret will until after what would have been an act of disobedience from which he would have had to repent.

Let us take another example. It was God's revealed will that Pharaoh should let the Israelites go. In other words, if Pharaoh wanted to please God then he needed to let the people go when God told him to. There was no obligation on Pharaoh to believe that it was God's purpose that God's people should go at the first summons, but there was an obligation upon him to obey what God had told him to do.

When God's Secret and Revealed Will meet



We are never called to do God's secret will unless that secret will corresponds with His revealed will. As John Owen wrote in Chapter 5 of *A Display of Arminianism*:

A master requires of his servant to do what he commands, not to accomplish what he

intends, which perhaps he never discovered unto him; nay, the commands of superiors are not always signs that the commander will have the things commanded actually performed (as in all precepts for trial), but only that they who are subjects to this command shall be obliged to obedience, as far as the sense of it doth extend.

So what does God intend by calling on men to pray for His will to be done if His will is always done? The answer lies in the rest of the sentence "on earth as it is in heaven". In

heaven, God's will is done instantly and with alacrity, whereas, on earth God's will is most often done by accident. As John Gill wrote in his commentary on this verse:

the will of God may be said to be done by us, when our will are resigned to his; when we patiently submit to every adverse dispensation of providence; when our hearts and actions are, in some measure, conformed to his law; when what is done, is done in faith, with a view to his glory, and without dependence upon it; of which such only are capable who have a spiritual understanding of the will of God, believe in Christ, receive grace and strength from him, and are assisted by his Spirit. These desire to do the will of God, as it is done in heaven; meaning not so much by the inanimate creatures, the sun, and moon, and stars, as glorified saints and holy angels, who do it voluntarily and cheerfully; speedily, and without delay; constantly, and without any interruption; and perfectly and completely.

Praying According to God's Will

We might add as an important aside that God has decreed in eternity past that man should pray and that God's providence to mankind should come as a result of prayer. It is a great mistake to believe that the predestination of events means that man is, therefore, not required to do anything. This would make mankind no different to robots rather than the morally responsible beings that we are. Every time you or I pray, God has decreed that even in eternity past. This should give us great confidence that if those prayers were so decreed then the answers are even more sure.

God's Simplicity

It is a mind-stretching thought that the whole of this world's history was planned in God's mind before it happened. However, a little reflection show us this must be the case for God is simple, that is he is not made up of parts. If He was then He too would have a creator. So God revealed Himself to Moses as "I am that I am" (Exodus 3:14). The creation and history of the world was one simple thought for God. Suppose it were not so and God had to change His plans according to His creature. Suppose He did not plan the Fall of man. That would make God less than sovereign, omniscient and

omnipotent. Yet all these things were planned right up to the end of the world.

As we have seen, just because God has planned the whole of world history before it happens does not mean that man is not a responsible agent. Man has been given duties. He was given a duty in the Garden of Eden and failed to carry it out. He has been given duties ever since in the shape of the Ten Commandments.

The Doctrine of Reprobation

Now I would like to move on to what is called the doctrine of reprobation which naturally flows from God planning and knowing everything before it happens and the fallen state of mankind after the Fall. We know that after the Fall, man was in a state of rebellion against God. Genesis 8:21 affirms that even after the flood, "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth". We know that the whole world is sold under sin as Paul wrote in Romans 3:23:- "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Now, while it was the revealed will of God that man should obey God, it was the hidden will of God that no man would or indeed could but, as we have already seen, this does not make God unrighteous because He is not an actor in man's sin and nor is He responsible for it. James 1:13 is perfectly clear on this point: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." In respect of this last phrase, John Gill commented as follows:

neither tempteth he any man: that is to sin; he tempted Abraham, to try his faith, love, and obedience to him; he tempted the Israelites in the wilderness, to try them and humble them, and prove what was in their hearts; and he tempted Job, and tried his faith and patience; and so he tempts and tries all his righteous ones, by afflictions, more or less: but he never tempts or solicits them to sin; temptations to sin come from another quarter...

Now an evil act cannot happen without God's permission but that is not the same as saying that God is responsible for it. What is absolutely clear is that a day is coming when every man will face judgment for what he has done and no one will be able to accuse God of injustice. The

Bible is clear as we read in Deuteronomy 32:4:- "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." Also, Psalm 92:15:- "to shew that the Lord is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him."

It is not controversial for me to state that the wicked will face judgment for our sins and that all of us deserve to face eternal punishment for our sins. It is also clear from scripture that the majority of mankind will face eternal punishment for their sins as we know from the lips of the Lord Jesus Himself in Matthew 7:13:- "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat."

From what we have already understood from the nature of God, those who will go to eternal destruction are already known by the Lord before they were born because every event has been decided in the mind of God before it happens. And so we read in Proverbs 16:4:- "The Lord hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." This is obviously a difficult verse because it is stating that God already knows the destination of a person before he is born. This may be a difficult concept for us to understand but this is also the teaching of Romans 9 which has been described as the Bible's commentary on God's decrees. Consider verse 17 concerning Pharaoh, "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout the earth." Then consider verse 22:- "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction".

It is said of Esau that before he was born he was hated. Certainly with a scripture like this it is difficult to assert that God loves all men. Indeed in Psalm 5:5, David asserts about the Lord, "thou hatest all workers of iniquity". Friends, God loves only *in Christ*, and in no other way.

Predestination to Damnation

Consider these other scriptures that speak of the predestination of men to damnation:

- 1 Pet. 2:8 – “And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were **appointed**.”
- 2 Peter 2:12 – “But these, as natural brute beasts, **made** to be taken and destroyed...”
- Jude 4 – “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before **of old ordained** to this condemnation...”
- Revelation 17:8 – “... whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world...”

It is a sobering fact that so many will go to a lost eternity and that is exactly where you and I should go since, along with the rest of mankind, we were born dead in trespasses and sins. Naturally speaking most of us have, at times before we were born again, rejected the Gospel. That is because, as we read in John 3:19:- “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” Why do men reject the Gospel? Because they love darkness and the works of darkness more than they love the light. That is why man will face judgment!

Should we accuse God of injustice, as many that reject the doctrine of predestination do because He has, before the beginning of time, foreordained that many people who came into the world should be destroyed eternally? Of course this becomes a very emotive subject. Our answer is already given to us in Romans 9:19-20:- “Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?”

The Justice and Mercy of God

If God were to have decided to condemn the whole world to hell, would He be acting unjustly? No, not in the least. We would have to say with Abraham, “Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25). And this surely is the point. God’s justice is not capricious. The Bible does not say that God will have justice on whom He will have justice but He does say that He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy.

The Bible is clear that every man will be judged on his works. We have this in a number of places:

1. John 5:28-29:- “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation”;
2. 2 Corinthians 5:10:- “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”;
3. Revelation 20:13:- “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.”

We know that there is no partiality or hypocrisy with the Lord for He is holy and just in all His ways. Therefore the predestination of the wicked to eternal destruction must be without injustice to the wicked or else the character of God would be impugned and God would cease to be God.

Thankfully, reprobation is not the end of the matter. The most astonishing and exciting truth is that God has not left all Mankind to suffer what they deserve but He has, before the beginning of time, chosen those who will be saved and that is what we will consider in the next edition of the Occasional Notes.

Easter Poems

By Faith Amurao

Who would I be?

Soldiers,

Women,

Robbers,

Each looked on

Him crucified.

If I were to walk into the scene of cruelty

Where would I stand?

Would I be standing holding the spear that wounded?

Would I be sitting with those who rolled the dice for his woven robe?

Would I be at a safe distance, weeping my lot to see him suffering beyond?

Would I be slandering him, mocking his impotence, unable to say anything worthy of a King?

Would I join in with the jeers

Until a quiet awakening dawns on me

That I am here hanging, a thief and a robber, justly for my crimes,

Looking from myself to him, see the immense chasm

That differentiates the guilty from the guiltless

And in my final hour, nearing the gates of death

As I beg to be remembered when he enters into his kingdom,

Would I hear him just audibly whisper to me,

“Today, thou shalt be with me in paradise”?

Alive!

A man was assumed to be the gardener
By the tomb where they laid my Jesus.
She begged to know where his body was taken away: where was it placed, elsewhere?
Elsewhere it was, for there standing before her was he.

It was him.

Then she recognised him, our Lord, who had expired for three long days –
Each felt like a century. Each minute his flesh was undergoing corruption
So how was it possible that he stands there now before her?

Amazed as bewildered

She wants to embrace him into her arms.

Noli mi tangere. "Touch me not

For I am yet to ascend into my Father's Kingdom."

How would I respond to see him there

Alive?

Perhaps, I would leap as high as possible at the sight of him who died, now

Alive!

What words to say, to repent for all the hours when I thought

My faith was lost with his burial?

What questions to ask for my fast beating heart and mind that races along

As fast as her feet could take her –

The woman, she is the first witness of his resurrection,

She is the first to bring the news to the weary, downtrodden disciples

Locking themselves up for fear of the authorities:

'He is alive!'

How could we have thought otherwise? How could we think that the grave
Could hold him prisoner? He broke its chains, he loosed himself from its bands

Waking, and rising earlier than the rising sun.

He rose from the cold stone,

He stood once more as my Jesus:

Once again, the Garden his place of triumph.

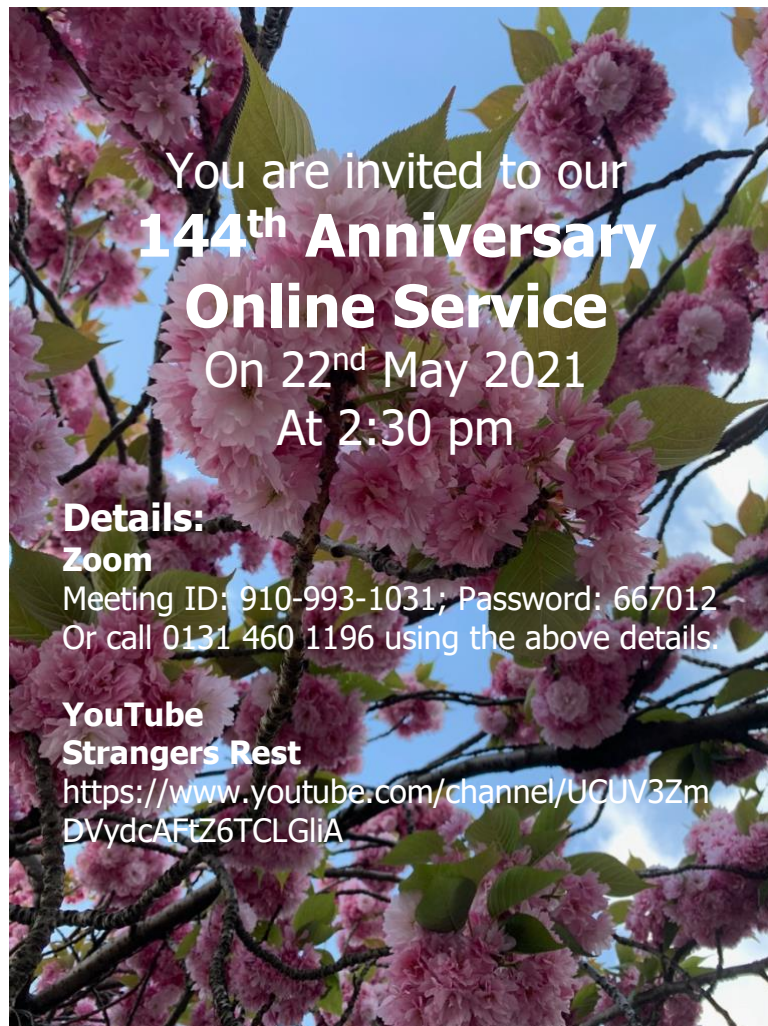
Praise and Prayer Requests

For Praise:

- Please give thanks for the blessing of being able to meet at church during lockdown;
- Please give thanks for the spiritual growth of one of our eldest boys (soon to be 18);
- Please give thanks that another 17 year old has resumed coming to some Sunday evening meetings recently with one of his younger sisters;
- Please give thanks for the Lord's blessing on the online Friday kids' club and Sunday School activities;
- Please give thanks for the continued involvement and support of some families who attend Sundays elsewhere at the children's Friday Bible Club.

For Prayer:

- Please pray that the Lord would be pleased to add a family to our number with a burden to reach Muslims;
- Please pray for our Gospel outreach in the community and beyond – that each of us would be given opportunities to make our Lord's name known;
- Please pray for continued spiritual growth and that the Lord would save souls here at Strangers Rest.



Editor – Mark Mullins (mlrmullins@gmail.com)

Editorial Assistant – Faith Amurao (faith.amurao@strangersrest.org)

Strangers Rest Evangelical Church, 131 The Highway, London, E1W 2BP; 07784531776.

Services: Sunday Service 11:00am and 6:30pm; Wednesday Bible Study 7:00pm;

Friday Children's Bible Club 6:30pm, Sunday School 4:00pm.

www.strangersrest.org