

TOPIC X

PREDESTINATION AND PREDETERMINATION

Part I. Is the Life span of a person pre-determined? Are one's days numbered by God? If so, then what about the concept of free will, predestination and so on? See Part II.

Part I

Immediately, when we put this into focus we are faced with a dilemma. Here's why. We often hear phrases like, "He or she died before their time." Or, "They were taken before their time." This, of course, assumes that God had them die or be killed earlier than we feel He should have. Or, we hear, "It must have been their time." Or, "Their time here was up." And other such statements. Most attribute what we consider to be a premature death to God's "divine plan."

Then we have those dear saints who, in their suffering or aged related debilitation seek to die and go be with the Lord, but their suffering and debilitation continues for years long after their lives are no longer profitable or useful to themselves. Yet it appears, as some teach. That God prolongs their suffering for "some higher cause." Can God use their extended lives for some good purpose? Of course. But could He also find a way to accomplish the same thing without extending the painful suffering of His "loved ones?"

To explain these circumstances and conditions, and the apparent cruelty God inflicts upon people, "learned" teachers and just plain folk come up with the most inane statements I have ever heard such as, "This was for their (or your) good as God has a plan we cannot understand." Or, "God had a good reason for this tragedy." Or, the classic that set Greg Laurie on edge after his son was killed in a car crash, "God always picks the prettiest flowers first." Or the Anne Graham Lotz stupidity, "God killed the millions in the hurricane disaster to get them to repent." This flies in the face of the clear scripture that says, "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4) And so on.

"I always wondered about this kind of thinking, even when I was a child and not a believer. Why would God cause the premature death of someone, especially a child and leave parents and loved ones in grief and pain. Then there are those children

who are abducted, raped, tortured, brutalized, killed and butchered, not to mention the millions of starving children around the world who die of this and terrible diseases and on it goes. Should we mention war or the holocaust or other incredible evils that God "caused" for some "higher purpose." What about, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."¹ How does killing millions of people help this cause? The fact is, that in most people's minds, God carries the responsibility for all of this. I never could figure this out. Then I did.

Then, of course, the church and Christians around the world state these kinds of platitudes and non-believers hear this and make the decision that they what nothing to do with that kind of God. Me neither.

So are these kinds of statements about God predetermining the time of a person's death regardless of what it takes to kill them true? And do they have any support in the scriptures? Those who adhere to the strict doctrine of pre-destination, as John Calvin and his followers do, will automatically state that this is the case for all peoples and events.

On the one hand, our concept of this idea may be different than what we find in the texts in the Bible. On the other hand, can we actually find sufficient evidence from the Bible itself that this thinking is true or not true? As far as that goes, there are few to no passages in the N. T. to choose from that even hint at answering this question. The O.T. has a few we can consider.

First, in the New Testament all we have are a very few verses that really do not approach answering this question. For example,

Hebrews 9:27, "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment....,"

The word "Appointed" is "apo-kei-mai" - to basically "set aside", "lay aside" or "reserved."

There are only four uses of this Greek word translated in the N.T. including Hebrews 9:27. The other three are: Luke 19:20; Colossians 1:5; II Timothy 4:8.

¹ II Peter 3:9

"Luke 19:20, "Another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I *kept put away in* a handkerchief;

Colossians 1:5, "... because of the hope *laid up* for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel."

II Timothy 4:6-8, 6: "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7: I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8: in the future there is *laid up* for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."

Does the phrase "the time of my departure" intend to convey that Paul's day of death was predetermined? The Greek word for time here is "kairos" not "chronos" indicating a general aspect of time such as a season rather than a specific date.

As to the word "appointed", there are other N. T. Greek words translated "appointed." Poi-eh-oh" used here is found 571 times in the N.T. but it means to "make" or "do" and is only translated "appointed" three times and never references this idea. Other words indicate a designation to an office and so on. But nothing relating to the "appointed" time of the death of a person is found in the New Testament which ought to tell us something.

We do have other indications in the N. T. of God having preplanned certain other events, however.

Galatians 4:4-5, 4: "But when the fullness of the time (chronos)² came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5: so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."³

And Jesus made a comment to His disciples after His resurrection,

Acts 1:6-7, 6: "So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time (chronos) You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" 7:

² A more specific or appointed time.

³ Note also 4:1-2

He said to them, "It is not for you to know times (chronos) or epochs (kairos) which the Father has fixed by His own authority;"

To Timothy Paul wrote,

"I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He will bring about at the proper time (kairos)--He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him *be* honor and eternal dominion! Amen." I Timothy 6:13-16

In Paul's sermon in Athens, he says, "...and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times (kairos) and the boundaries of their habitation,..." Acts 17:26

And so on.

There seems little doubt that God set times for certain events to transpire, such as the coming of Christ into the world. But are these based in His foreknowledge or pre-determined without a view to the future? Hard to say.

If we draw a time line, do we understand God's appointments as being made as He sees the end from the beginning and how human history plays out? Or does He just insert "appointed times" at intervals without consideration of the human drama or anything going on here on earth? If the latter, then why prophecy?

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Beginning

End

Speaking of prophecy, we have several Old Testament passages relating to this as well, mostly in the Book of Daniel.

Daniel 8:19 He said, "Behold, I am going to let you know what will occur at the final period of the indignation, for *it* pertains to the appointed time (moed)⁴ of the end.

⁴ "Moed" indicates a specific and appointed time.

Daniel 11:27-35, 27: "As for both kings, their hearts will be *intent* on evil, and they will speak lies *to each other* at the same table; but it will not succeed, for the end is still *to come* at the appointed time. 28: "Then he will return to his land with much plunder; but his heart will be *set* against the holy covenant, and he will take action and *then* return to his *own* land. 29: "At the appointed time he will return and come into the South, but this last time it will not turn out the way it did before. 30: "For ships of Kittim will come against him; therefore he will be disheartened and will return and become enraged at the holy covenant and take action; so he will come back and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant. 31: "Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation. 32: "By smooth *words* he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action. 33: "Those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder for *many* days. 34: "Now when they fall they will be granted a little help, and many will join with them in hypocrisy. 35: "Some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge and make them pure until the end time(*moed*); because *it is still to come* at the appointed time."

The rest of the "appointed times" are in reference to the already established periods when Israel celebrated events such as Passover or at times of sacrifice and offerings in specific seasons and dates. The only other exceptions are in Job and in a Psalm. We will discuss the poem in Ecclesiastes 3 as well.

Now, in Job 14 there is a verse that could be interpreted as God setting the day of our death .

Job 14:1-5, 1: "Man, who is born of woman, Is short-lived and full of turmoil. 2: "Like a flower he comes forth and withers. He also flees like a shadow and does not remain. 3: "You also open Your eyes on him And bring him into judgment with Yourself. 4: "Who can make the clean out of the unclean? No one! **5: "Since his days are determined, The number of his months is with You; And his limits You have set so that he cannot pass.**

This isolated verse could convince us that there is a predetermined or pre-appointed time when a person will die. Let's continue a bit.

6: "Turn Your gaze from him that he may rest, Until he fulfills his day like a hired man. 7: "For there is hope for a tree, When it is cut down, that it will sprout again, And its shoots will not fail. 8: "Though its roots grow old in the

ground And its stump dies in the dry soil, 9: At the scent of water it will flourish And put forth sprigs like a plant. 10: "But man dies and lies prostrate. Man expires, and where is he? 11: "As water evaporates from the sea, And a river becomes parched and dried up, 12: So man lies down and does not rise. Until the heavens are no longer, He will not awake nor be aroused out of his sleep. 13: "Oh that You would hide me in Sheol, That You would conceal me until Your wrath returns *to You*, That You would set a limit for me and remember me! 14: "If a man dies, will he live *again*? All the days of my struggle I will wait Until my change comes. 15: "You will call, and I will answer You; You will long for the work of Your hands. 16: "For now You number my steps, You do not observe my sin. 17: "My transgression is sealed up in a bag, And You wrap up my iniquity. 18: "But the falling mountain crumbles away, And the rock moves from its place; 19: Water wears away stones, Its torrents wash away the dust of the earth; So You destroy man's hope. 20: "You forever overpower him and he departs; *You* change his appearance and send him away. 21: "His sons achieve honor, but he does not know *it*; Or they become insignificant, but he does not perceive it. 22: "But his body pains him, And he mourns only for himself."

We have ideas coming from the mouth of Job, in poetry, who is lamenting his own condition and has generalized it to all of humanity. We know that later, God criticizes Job for knowing nothing about anything. So how can we use this passage as a sound basis for this idea? Isolating a verse as a proof text is not profitable. But it is done all the time by preachers and teachers to prove a point they want to emphasize.

Then we have,

Psalm 39:4-5, 4: "LORD, make me to know my end And what is the extent of my days; Let me know how transient I am. 5: "Behold, You have made my days *as* handbreadths, And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; Surely every man at his best is a mere breath. Selah."

No real help there. And though we could excavate verse 2 from Ecclesiastes, chapter 3, the remainder of the poem negates any idea of this we could point to.

1: "There is an appointed (season) time⁵ for everything. And there is a time⁶ for

⁵ "Zaman" - an occasion, season appointment or to fix a time.

⁶ "Eth" - a period or season, a general non-specific time, and this word is used for the rest of the passage where "time" is the English translation.

every event under heaven-- 2: A time to give birth and a time to die; A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted. But -----

3: "A time to kill and a time to heal; A time to tear down and a time to build up. 4: A time to weep and a time to laugh; A time to mourn and a time to dance. 5: A time to throw stones and a time to gather stones; A time to embrace and a time to shun embracing. 6: A time to search and a time to give up as lost; A time to keep and a time to throw away. 7: A time to tear apart and a time to sew together; A time to be silent and a time to speak. 8: A time to love and a time to hate; A time for war and a time for peace."

But, this is a poetic passage and note that these times come in the life of humanity and they are inevitable in the human situation as it is. Ecclesiastes is a book about the futility of life without God.

The passage concludes,

3:19-22, 19: "For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity. 20: All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust. 21: Who knows that the breath of man ascends upward and the breath of the beast descends downward to the earth? 22: I have seen that nothing is better than that man should be happy in his activities, for that is his lot. For who will bring him to see what will occur after him?"

Then we have the strange case of Hezekiah found in II Kings 20:1-11⁷,

1: In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.'" 2: Then he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, saying, 3: "Remember now, O LORD, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart and have done what is good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly. 4: Before Isaiah had gone out of the middle court, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 5: "Return and say to Hezekiah the leader of My people, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David, "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD. 6: "I will add fifteen years to your life, and I will deliver you and this

⁷ See Also: Isaiah, chapter 38

city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake and for My servant David's sake." 7: Then Isaiah said, "Take a cake of figs." And they took and laid *it* on the boil, and he recovered. 8: Now Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "What will be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the LORD the third day?" 9: Isaiah said, "This shall be the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that He has spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten steps or go back ten steps?" 10: So Hezekiah answered, "It is easy for the shadow to decline ten steps; no, but let the shadow turn backward ten steps." 11: Isaiah the prophet cried to the LORD, and He brought the shadow on the stairway back ten steps by which it had gone down on the stairway of Ahaz."⁸

As one member of our study group pointed out, it was during this additional fifteen Years that Hezekiah, by Hephzibah, had Manasseh, his son who succeeded him as king at the age of twelve. This carried on both the Davidic and Messianic line. It appears that Manasseh was his only son.⁹

Now we do recognize that God sees and knows everything that happens in advance. And even some isolated passages can reveal this.

Isaiah 46:9-10, 9: "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me, 10: Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';

Acts 2:22-23, 22: "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know-- 23: this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death."

I Peter 1:1-2, 1: "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen 2: according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure."

⁸ See also Isaiah, chapter 38.

⁹ Karen Loscavio made this observation.

So the question is, Does God know the day we die and thus sets it's appointment?
Or does He set the appointed time of our death regardless of what we do? Or does
He just know the date of our death but does not reveal it?

One of the things that irk me is when a loved one dies, especially unexpectedly, the
comment is often made, "Well, it was his or her time." Who said? Maybe it was
the irresponsible stupidity of a drunk driver who killed the child. Or?