

## **Elected for Eternity**

### **Revelation 7:9-10, 13**

So, did you win? Were you a big winner in the elections last Tuesday? Were the people you voted for elected? Did the proposals you said “yes” to accepted?

Or were your candidates defeated? Was Wednesday a happy day for you or a sad day? Or have you voted in so many elections that you’re jaded to the outcome and don’t care much anymore?

Obviously, for many in the US, last Wednesday was a day for celebration; for many a day for wondering what happened.

For the candidates who won, a day of jubilation, and for some of the first-time winners, perhaps some anxiety, too, wondering if they can do the job they were elected to do, and, if they will be seduced by the power of their office and become someone they would rather not be.

For the candidates who lost, perhaps some bitterness, some wondering why they were rejected, some regret, perhaps about some of the decisions they made while they held office.

And for us all, now the wondering starts. Will the newly-elected candidates do something new or will it be “business as usual” in Washington? Will this crop of elected officials have the answers to what troubles America today? Will things be better in two years or 4 years?

We don't know. In many ways, this system is annoying, unresponsive or at least too slowly responsive, messy, sometimes downright coarse and ugly.

But, as Winston Churchill said,  
"Democracy is the worst form of government except for all those others that have been tried."

Election may be a poor way to find our leaders, and we may not like the outcome of every election, but, at least, we can't say that they have been forced upon us. Nor that we are without recourse if we don't like them.

Election is a Biblical term, too. It has the same core meaning of "selecting", but there the similarity ends.

Paul talks about election rather extensively. Jesus does, too, but more obliquely than Paul.

Speaking of the Judgment Day, Jesus says to His disciples in Matthew 24:22: "If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened."

The "elect". Hmmmm.....

And again, speaking of the last days in Matthew 24:24: “For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”

And Jesus again in Mark 13:27:

“And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.”

So, who are these “elect”?

Paul talks about them in his second letter to Timothy 2:10

“Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.”

And in his letter to Titus 1:1, he writes:

“Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—“

The apostle Peter writes of election in 1 Peter 1:1

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God’s elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces...”

And he also says in 2 Peter 1:3

“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who CALLED us by his own glory and goodness.”

And again in 2 Peter 1:10

|"Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election."

So, who or what are these "elect" that Jesus, Paul, and Peter talk and write about? And what is this "election?"

"Election" in the Scriptures is at one and the same time one of the most comforting and most difficult-to-understand teachings in all of Scripture.

Simply stated, this clearly taught, but difficult-to-understand doctrine means that those who receive forgiveness and eternal life are chosen, or elected, by God to do so.

Elected for eternity! That's a politician's dream! Can you imagine the joy of the politician's who were elected or re-elected last Tuesday if they were told that they were elected for life!

You and I have been elected for eternity. We have been given heaven as a free gift from God.

No one understands nor can explain this teaching or this process completely, but it is clearly taught in Scripture as truth. It is wrapped up in the doctrine of predestination, another complex and paradoxical doctrine which we accept by faith without being able to fully understand or explain it.

Luther wrote of it:

Luther: “If you listen to Jesus, are baptized in His name, and love His Word, then you are surely predestined and are certain of your salvation.”

What is predestination? What is election?

Together they are the Biblical teaching that all who ultimately go to heaven go there because God predestined them to do so and elected them to eternal life.

What can we say about these things? In truth, not much, other than that they are taught as Scriptural truths. Luther said that God has chosen to reveal some things about Himself and His workings among mankind, and some things He has chosen to remain hidden. Therefore, Luther says,

“At all events, accept the present promise and the predestination, and do not inquire too curiously about the secret counsels of God. If you believe in the revealed God and accept His Word, He will gradually also reveal the hidden God; for “He who sees Me also sees the Father,” as John 14:9 says”.

And Solomon says in Ecclesiastes (3:22), “Seek not the things that are too high for you, and search not into things above your ability; but the things that God has commanded you, think on them always, and in many of His works be not curious.”

Luther concludes, “Listen to the incarnate Son, and predestination will present itself of its own accord.

AS with the doctrine of the Trinity and the nature of Holy Communion, there are some things that we simply will not understand this side of heaven.

For now, give thanks that you have been elected, you have been elected to receive eternal life by our gracious God who values you and wants you to be with Him eternally.

You did not have to campaign for this election. It came freely by God’s grace.

There was a campaign, but you and I had nothing to do with it. It began in the Garden of Eden when God said that He would fix what Adam and Eve had broken – mankind’s relationship with God.

It continued through the people of Israel as God set the stage for the coming of His Savior.

Campaign headquarters moved from Bethlehem to Egypt to Nazareth to Jerusalem, and finally to Calvary and a tomb. Jesus’ came among us, lived with us, and died for us, taking the punishment for the sins of all mankind in His own body and spirit.

The cost of the campaign for our election was high, measured not in shekels or dollars but in the blood of Jesus.

At the Resurrection of Jesus, the campaign was completed.

Do you wonder if you are among the elect? That's an easy one to answer: Do you believe in Jesus? If you do, then you have been elected!

Luther, too, was troubled by those thoughts. He wrote, "Staupitz (his spiritual mentor) used to comfort me with these words: "Why do you torture yourself with these speculations? Look at the wounds of Christ and at the blood that was shed for you. From these predestination will shine. Consequently, one must listen to the Son of God, who was sent into the flesh and appeared to destroy the work of the devil (1 John 3:8) and to make you sure about predestination. And for this reason He says to you: 'You are My sheep because you hear My voice' (cf. John 10:27). 'No one shall snatch you out of My hands' " (cf. v. 28). "

"Therefore when the devil assails you with them, you should only say: "I believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, about whom I have no doubt that He was made flesh, suffered, and died for me. Into His death I have been baptized." This answer will make the trial disappear, and Satan will turn his back."

No one can explain why some are elected and others not. To try to do so is futile and a waste of time.

Rather give thanks to God that you have been elected to eternal life as a free gift through faith in Jesus.

And know that you and I have a part in election. To us has been given the privilege and task of spreading the word, of inviting others to meet Jesus for it is through His holy Word that God calls others into His kingdom.

Paul wrote the Corinthians:

“...no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.”  
(1 Corinthians 12:3)

And Jesus said,

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. (John 6:44)

He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.” (John 6:65)

So, rather than mulling over the whys and wherefores of predestination and election, God invites us to something more productive, more important – to be a part of the process – to invite others into the kingdom through faith in Jesus.

Someone, at some point in your life, brought you to Jesus: your parents brought you to Baptism; a friend brought you to church; a teacher or pastor spoke the Word of God to you or helped you understand the Scriptures. Someone was part of the process of your election.

Be that someone for someone else. We all know them. They're in our families, our workplaces, our schools, our neighborhoods, the Rotary, the PTA, your Bunco group, your hunt club. People

whom God has elected, but they need to meet Him through His Word.

Share your faith with them. Give them a Bible, invite them to church, start a Bible class in your home, tell them what Jesus means to you.

The Holy Spirit will be right there with you, telling you what to say, showing you what to do.

So that they can have the wonderful assurance that you have – that they are elected, the chosen, chosen for eternal life through faith in Jesus.

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“Accordingly, you who are listening to me now should remember that I have taught that one should not inquire into the predestination of the hidden God but should be satisfied with what is revealed through the calling and through the ministry of the Word. For then you can be sure about your faith and salvation and say: “I believe in the Son of God, who said (John 3:36): ‘He who believes in the Son has eternal life.’ ”

(Biblical quotes from *The Holy Bible, New International Version*, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, by International Bible Society.)

(Luther quotes from the *American Edition of Luther’s Works 5:43-50; Luther’s Genesis Commentary, commenting on Genesis 29:9*).

