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Election

The biblical usage of “election” has absolutely nothing to do with salvation contrary to the teaching of Calvinism. Calvin summarizes this foundational doctrine in his book Institutes of the Christian Religion(Book 3 chapter 21): “Of the eternal election, by which God has predestinated some to salvation, and others to destruction.” He qualifies his summary by stating:

The predestination by which God adopts some to the hope of life, and adjudges others to eternal death, no man who would be thought pious ventures simply to deny...By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death. (Calvin Institutes 3:21:5: 06)

Calvinist James White reiterates Calvin’s words demonstrating that Calvin meant what he said. White states: “God elects a specific people unto Himself without reference to anything they do. This means the basis of God’s choice of the elect is solely

within Himself. His grace, His mercy, His will. It is not man's actions, works, or even foreseen faith, that "draws" God's choice. God's election is unconditional and final". (James R. White, *The Potter's Freedom*, Amityville, NY: Calvary Press, 2000, p. 39) This is also echoed by Loraine Boettner, in *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*

"The Doctrine of absolute Predestination of course logically holds that some are foreordained to death as truly as others are foreordained to life. The very terms 'elect' and 'election' imply the terms 'non-elect' and 'reprobation'. When some are chosen out others are left not chosen. The high privileges and glorious destiny of the former are not shared with the latter. Those who hold the doctrine of Election but deny that of Reprobation can lay but little claim to consistency. To affirm the former while denying the latter makes the decree of predestination an illogical and lop-sided decree. The creed which states the former but denies the latter will resemble a wounded eagle attempting to fly with but one wing." (Loraine Boettner *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* 1932 from 2000 bible study centre™ DIGITAL LIBRARY p. 104-5)

The good news, however, is that "election, elect, chosen" (and the derivatives) are terms that have nothing to do with one's eternal destiny. Scripture does speak at length of "the elect" and "the chosen" but these terms are devoid of the Calvinistic sense of someone who has been chosen to receive eternal life. The term 'elect' and its derivatives therefore are not salvific in

meaning but simply refer to persons or things that are chosen for a particular purpose and the purpose has nothing to do with eternal life. Once the definition of the word is established biblically, the foundation of Calvinism will be undermined and will collapse and arguing the tenants of TULIP will become inapplicable.

The word elect (Greek verb: eklegomai ἐκλέγομαι; Hebrew verb: bakhār בָּחַר) means to choose, select. The elect or chosen (as nouns or adjectives) are those people or things that have been elected, selected, or chosen for a particular purpose by someone. Scripture bears witness that elect and its derivatives have nothing to do with someone being chosen specifically to eternal life.

The Election of Priests, Kings, and Disciples

In the Old Testament, we see times when God chose, and people chose.

God chose Levi to minister forever “... *the LORD your God has chosen* [bakhār בָּחַר Greek LXX eklexetai εκλεξεται] him...”

Deuteronomy 18:5 (see also **1 Chronicles 15:2**)

God chose Saul to be the first king of Israel. What is fascinating about King Saul is that he was chosen both by God and the people:

1 Samuel 10:24, *And Samuel said to all the people, “Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen, that there is no one like him among all the people?” (Hebrew and Greek are the same roots as above)...”*

Two chapters later he was chosen by the people:

1 Samuel 12:13, *“Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen and whom you have desired. And take note, the Lord has set a king over you.*

Saul’s election by God had nothing to do with eternal life. Saul was chosen, elected by God for the purpose to be king over Israel and with that he had all of the potential to be a good king and for his lineage to be the lineage of the Messiah.

Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD?

1 Samuel 15:19 & 22-23, ¹⁹ *Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord? Why did you swoop down on the ^[c]spoils, and do evil in the sight of the Lord?”*

²² *So Samuel said: “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. ²³ For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king.”*

It is only after repeated disobedience is Saul rejected and David chosen to take his place. Saul's election by God to be king had nothing to do with eternal life and his removal from being king likewise had nothing to do with eternal life, he was simply removed from his post.

Saul is analogous to Judas in many ways because both he and Judas were chosen yet they both forfeited their election.

John 6:70, *Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose [eklegomai ἐκλέγομαι] you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?"*

God elected David to be king and passed over the other seven sons of Jesse.

1 Samuel 16:7-10, *⁷ But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."⁸ So Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one."⁹ Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one."¹⁰ Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen these."*

The choosing or election had nothing to do with eternal life according to the Calvinist definition: God chose David because

of what He saw in the heart and He chose him to be king – not for the purpose of eternal life.

See **Luke 6:13; John 13:18, 15:16, 19; Acts 1:2, 24, 15:7** concerning Jesus choosing of the disciples, one of whom was a devil (John 6:70).

The Election of Messiah and Angels

God's election of Messiah further demonstrates that the term election is devoid of the Calvinistic concept of eternal life.

Jesus, the Messiah-God-Incarnate, certainly has no need of salvation or eternal life; He is the source of life!

Isaiah 42:1 & 49:7, *“Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One [LXX: eklektos εκλεκτος] in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him*

This very title was used of Jesus on the cross

Luke 23:35 And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, “He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.”

Peter further confirms God's election of the Messiah!

1 Peter 2:4 -6, *Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ Therefore it is also contained in the*

Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."

Jesus was unquestionably chosen, elected, predestined by God to be the Messiah but His election was not for His salvation. He was chosen by the Father to give us eternal life!

In a similar fashion we find that angels can be elected – demonstrating that “elect” does not mean chosen to eternal life **Hebrews 2:16**, *For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.*

The fact that God only offers salvation to mankind.

1 Timothy 5:21, *I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality.*

The Election of Jerusalem

God also elected (chose) Jerusalem to be His city proving that election has nothing to do with eternal life.

2 Chronicles 6:6, *Yet I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name may be there, and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel.'*

1 Kings 8:44, *"When Your people go out to battle against their enemy, wherever You send them, and when they pray to*

the Lord toward **the city which You have chosen** and the temple which I have built for Your name,

1 Kings 11:32, (but he shall have one tribe for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem, **the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel**),

1 Kings 11:36, And to his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may always have a lamp before Me in Jerusalem, **the city which I have chosen for Myself**, to put My name there.

Psalms 132:13, For **the Lord has chosen Zion**; He has desired it for His dwelling place.

In all of these verses we see that God has chosen or elected Jerusalem for a purpose and the word election does not entail eternal life.

The Election of False Gods and Foolish Things

In Corinthians we learn that God has chosen foolish, weak, base and despised things.

1 Corinthians 1:27-28, But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which

are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,

James 2:5, *Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?*

Not only is election used to describe God's choosing of people, places, and things for His special purposes, it is used for men's choosing of the true God and of false gods.

Joshua 24:22, *So Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord for yourselves, to serve Him."*

Judges 10:14, *"Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress."*

Luke 14:8, *"When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honourable than you be invited by him;*

From the above verses is that election has nothing to do with predestination to eternal life.

God chose priests, kings and Jerusalem for His purposes and man chose both God and idols. We would be wrong to try to insert the concept of predestination into the term election.

The Election of Israel

While election is made by God and men of people and places, there is a usage that stands out uniquely in Scripture: God's chosen people, the elect, are the Israelites.

The title "chosen/elect" is in no less than eight verses in Scripture.

The use of the title "elect" to describe Israel becomes very important when we venture into the New Testament because it clears up many theological, soteriological, and eschatological issues.

1 Chronicles 16:13, *O seed of Israel His servant, You children of Jacob, His chosen ones!*

Psalms 33:12, *Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, The people He has chosen as His own inheritance.*

Psalms 105:6, *O seed of Abraham His servant, You children of Jacob, His chosen ones!*

Psalms 105:43, *He brought out His people with joy, His chosen ones with gladness.*

Psalms 135:4, *For the Lord has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His special treasure.*

Isaiah 45:4, *For Jacob My servant's sake, And **Israel My elect**, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me.*

Isaiah 65:9, *I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, And from Judah an heir of My mountains; **My elect shall inherit it**, And My servants shall dwell there.*

Isaiah 65:22, *They shall not build and another inhabit; They shall not plant and another eat; For as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, And **My elect shall long enjoy** the work of their hands.*

The verses above demonstrate how God has specifically called Israel, Jacob, the Seed of Abraham His chosen. Thus, the term “the chosen” or “my chosen” and “the elect” is a reference to ethnic Israel. This point is proven by Paul who, in a synagogue on the Sabbath day in Antioch, read from the Law and Prophets and then spoke to his fellow Jews.

Acts 13:16-17, *Then Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, “Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen: ¹⁷ The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He brought them out of it.*

Thus, the election of Israel was true in the Old Testament and the New Testament as well.

The “Few Chosen” Are Israelites

The definition of “the elect/chosen” have been established, let us proceed to the teachings of Jesus, we must remember was Himself Jewish.

In Matthew 22 Jesus, speaking with the Pharisees, compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a King who prepared a wedding feast for His Son.

Those that were invited to the wedding feast were not interested in coming so the King sent His servants out calling everyone who would come. That the invited guests to the wedding were the Israelites is certain. But the elect did not make it to the wedding feast.

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees in **Matthew 8:11**, *“And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”*

There are also many passages in the Old Testament that speak of the Messianic age in which the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would be God’s special people.

For detail study the following Chapters in the book of Isaiah 2, 4, 11, 60-66).

Therefore, Jesus’ statement “For many are called, but few are chosen,” (**Matthew 22:14**; & **20:16**) must be interpreted in light of who are the chosen, that is the Jews! The chosen, elect (the

Jews) were the ones to whom the promise of the Messianic Age was first given.

However, when the bridegroom came they were not willing to come and therefore God the Father gave instruction for all (the many) to be called to the feast. Understanding who the elect are unlocks the passage for us. Knowing that the elect are the Jews completely rules out any Calvinistic interpretation of the passage. Note that both the called and chosen still needed salvation as indicated by the wedding garment and he who was found in the feast without a garment was cast out.

The Elect in the Tribulation

In Matthew 24 in which Jesus is telling the disciples of what the days of the tribulation would be like. Armed with the knowledge that the elect are the Jews, we can consistently interpret the passage; the elect in Matthew 24 are not Gentile believers in the tribulation, but are God's chosen, that is the Jews.

Matthew 22:22 & 24, *“And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; **but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened...**”*

*For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, **even the elect.***

Mark 13:20, *And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days.*

Emphasizing those whom God chose, the Jews.

If the elects are interpreted as those whom God has predestined to eternal life, then a challenge arises, in particular, for those of us of a pre-tribulation perspective.

Who exactly is being gathered at the end of the tribulation?

Matthew 24:31, *“He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”*

There can be no question that this gathering happens after the events of the Great Tribulation and yet, if it is referring to the same catching up of believers in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, then the teaching of the pre-tribulation rapture would be nullified.

However, once we realize that the elects here are not believers in general but specifically the Israelites/Jews then the matter is resolved. Two-thirds of the (up to then non-believing) Jews will tragically perish and the one-third (**Zechariah 13:8**) remaining will be gathered at the end of the Great Tribulation. It also fits in with Revelation 19 where the believers return with Jesus to the earth because they have already been caught up to Him.

The Old Testament proves that the gathering of the elect in Matthew 24 must be speaking of the Jews. Jesus used the language of Isaiah 11 to describe the gathering of the elect, an obvious reference to the Jews.

Isaiah 11:12, *“He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”*

The gathering of the Jews is further predicted in Isaiah 43:5, 54:7, and Zechariah 2:6.

When we realize that the usage of “chosen” or “elect” has nothing to do with (predestined to) eternal life then many of the difficult Bible passages are easy to interpret.

The Elect in Peter’s Epistles Are Jewish

Peter likewise uses the term elect to describe the Jews.

1 Peter 1:1-2, *“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ...”*

The word “dispersion” (Greek diaspora διασπορά) was used to describe the scattering among the nations that God had promised to the Jews (Israel) if they would not follow Him

(Leviticus 26:33; Deuteronomy 4:27; Nehemiah 1:8, etc.; the LXX uses the same Greek word as the NT).

James, in his epistle, could not be any clearer that the diaspora is Israel when he says in James 1:1, *“To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad [en te diaspora εν τη διασπορα]: Greetings.”*

The twelve tribes are of course Israel (the Jews) and they are in the diaspora, the same group to which Peter was addressing his letter.

Lastly, we must acknowledge two important points.

- 1) Peter was the apostle to the Jews. In **Galatians 2:7-9** Paul states that he *“was entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised just as Peter was to the circumcised”*.
- 2) Babylon was the third largest Jewish center in the ancient world. When the Jews were given leave under Cyrus to return to Israel in 536 BC, only a small remnant returned while many thousands stayed in Babylon. The writing of the Babylonian Talmud gives concrete proof to the fact that Babylon was a major center of Jewish life and culture. Since Peter was the apostle specifically appointed to take the Gospel to the Jews, then finding him in Babylon (not Rome!) in the company of Jews is simple enough to grasp.

Peter is writing from Babylon, in the company of other Jews (the chosen) to fellow chosen ones who were also in the diaspora (that is, not living in Israel). Realizing that Peter is the apostle to the (elect) Jews and is writing from Babylon to other (elect) Jews facilitates the interpretation of the two epistles.

In 1 Peter chapter two Peter writes concerning his Jewish (believing) brethren,

1 Peter 2:5 & 9, *“you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. But you are a chosen generation [note: the Greek word is genos (race) not genea(generation)], a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.”*

These same words were used repeatedly in the Old Testament to describe the Jewish people:

Exodus 19:5-6, *Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. ‘And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.*

Deuteronomy 7:6, *“For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for*

Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.

Deuteronomy 14:2, *“For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.*

Psalms 135:4, *For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His special treasure.*

1 Peter 2:10, *“You once were not a people, but now you are God’s people. You were shown no mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

The passage is taken from Hosea where God, speaking to Israel, **Hosea 1:9**, *“Then the LORD said: “Name him ‘Not My People’ (Lo-Ammi), because you are not my people and I am not your God.”*

Peter is demonstrating that their previous condition has been undone in Jesus Christ. This truth is given by God through Hosea.

Hosea 1:10 & 2:23, *“However, in the future the number of the people of Israel will be like the sand of the sea which can be neither measured nor numbered. Although it was said to them, “You are not my people,” it will be said to them, “You are children of the living God!”*

Elect but Not Saved

When we read in **2 Peter 1:10**, *“Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble”*

We know that Peter is talking to Jews and that their election has nothing to do with salvation.

Therefore, this is not a Calvinistic call for us to somehow make sure that we have been chosen to eternal life! It is rather a reminder to the chosen people to embrace the fact that they were elected, chosen by God to be His special treasure. However, their election is by no means an absolute guarantee that they will inherit eternal life.

Paul validates this fact so clearly when he wrote a letter to his spiritual son Timothy in

2 Timothy 2:10, *“Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”*

Note well that Paul must endure for the elect, the Jews, so that they too might be saved.

As we have seen, election has nothing to do with salvation.

Furthermore, election is generally a term used of the Jews, who are of course, the chosen people.

This is confirmed yet again by Paul, who is speaking about the Jews.

Romans 11:28, *“Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.”*

The Elect in Romans Are Israelites

Part of the challenge of understanding Romans is to recognize that Paul is speaking to the believers in Rome who are both Jewish and Gentile (non-Jewish). We learn that from the way that he addresses his readers.

Romans 1:16, *“...the gospel of Christ ... is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”*

“**Jew and Greek**” is a combination that he uses throughout this letter to Romans.

For example, Romans 2:9, 10; 10:12. Romans 2:17 Paul speaks specifically to the Jews.

Romans 2:17, *“Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God,*
Paul then asks what advantage the Jew has, and he answers his question.

Romans 3:1-2, *What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? ² Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.*

In chapter four Paul speaks of Abraham who was their father according to the flesh.

Romans 4:1, *What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?*

Finally, Paul bridges the apparent controversial between the Jews and Greeks of the Roman church with the following conclusion.

Romans 10:12, *“For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.”*

Having seen that the book of Romans was written in large part to the elect, the Jews, (see also Acts 18:2 and Romans 16:3 concerning Roman Jews) as well as Gentiles, we can now see that the many uses of the word “elect” are not references to salvation, predestination etc. Rather they are reference to the Israelites (elected by God)

Romans 9:4-5, *who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; ⁵ of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.*

Therefore, Paul’s question “Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect?” (Rom 8:33) is not Calvinistic (predestined to eternal life) but is a reference to the elect Jews (see above: 1

Chronicles 16:13, Psalms 33:12; 105:6; 105:43; 135:4, Isaiah 45:4; 65:9; 65:22). This concept is consistent throughout the book.

Romans 9-11 is the great defense of Scripture, par excellence, that God has not cast away His people. Paul begins the section by showing how God began with Abraham and then chose Isaac over Ishmael, and then Jacob over Esau. Speaking of the two nations in Rebecca's womb.

Romans 9:11, *“for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election [ekloge εκλογη] might stand, not of works but of Him who calls.”*

The election has nothing to do with Calvinistic predestination but with God choosing Jacob rather than Esau to be the one who would receive the oracles of God etc.

Election of Grace

Romans 11:5, *“Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election [ekloge εκλογη] of grace.”*

This was spoken of the encounter of Elijah and the 400 Israelite prophets of Baal. Just when Elijah thought all was lost, God informed him that He had reserved 7000 that had not followed the evil ways of Baal. And thus, in like manner, most of Israel,

who had been chosen, elected by God to be the conduit of blessing to the world, had rejected that special calling.

This concurs with what Jesus stated in **Matthew 22:14**, “*few [the Jews] are chosen*” and that small group had for the most part rejected the special RSVP that God had sent to them to come to the wedding feast.

Paul continues in **Romans 11:7**, “*What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect [ekloge εκλογη] have obtained it, and the rest were blinded.*”

It must be noted that the word elect here is in fact feminine singular— demonstrating that it is not speaking of “the elect ones” (masculine plural eklektoιεκλεκτοι) but “election”. This means that in both Romans 11:5 and 11:7 the term is “election” thus God’s action of selecting Abraham, Isaac, Jacob to be the recipients of the promises (Rom 9:4-5).

The entire context of the elect and election has to do with Israel as evidenced by Paul’s statement in **Romans 11:11**, how they, the Jews, “*have not stumbled so as to fall... On the contrary, because of their stumbling, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make the Jews jealous.*”

The biblical “election of grace” is not Calvin’s idea of God choosing some to eternal life and others to eternal damnation;

it is rather God choosing the Jewish race, which was based purely on God's grace and not their righteousness. God spoke this through Moses.

Deuteronomy 9:5, *"It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."*

That the election of grace is referring to God's choosing of the fathers is further established.

Romans 11:12 & 15, *"Now if their stumbling means riches for the world, and if their fall means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean! For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?"*

Israel, nationally speaking, rejected the invitation to come to the wedding feast when the Bridegroom came which thereby translated into riches for the Gentiles.

However, the election of grace, that is God's making promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their seed, was an irrevocable call which is why Paul says about the unbelieving Jews.

Romans 11:28-29, *“Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”*

Paul probably had **Jeremiah 31:35-37**, among other passages, in mind when speaking of the irrevocability of God’s promise. God had called Israel to himself and would never let them go completely.

Romans 11:2, *“God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew.”*

Peter also confirms that God foreknew the Israelites, in **1 Peter 1:2**, *“to the pilgrims of the Dispersion elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father”*

God chose Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants for a special purpose. His choosing them (election) had nothing to do with the Calvinistic idea of predestination to eternal life and eternal damnation. Though the Jews were elect, they were not automatically saved. They for the most part had rejected the invitation to the wedding feast and as such were blinded but they would be restored in the end.

Foreknowledge

Foreknowledge is a companion of election – but just like election, foreknowledge is a general reference to God having known the Israelites beforehand. Consider Paul’s definitive statement.

Romans 11:1-2, *“So I ask, God has not rejected his people, has he? Absolutely not! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew [proginosko προγινώσκω].”*

The word foreknow, like election, has nothing to do with having predestined someone to eternal life or eternal damnation, as Calvin suggested. “Foreknow” and “foreknowledge” are simply a verb and noun of the same basic stem.

Look at the following verses that demonstrate that knowing something ahead of time is not only possible for God but for man as well and it does not entail the Calvinistic concept whatsoever.

Acts 26:5, *“They knew me from the first [proginosko προγινώσκω], if they were willing to testify...”*

2 Peter 3:17, *“You therefore, beloved, since you know [this] beforehand [proginosko προγινώσκω], beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness...”*

In both of the verses, the word is the same – foreknowing and neither is God’s foreknowledge; it is simply man’s. Certainly neither of those two examples carries any sense of Calvinistic predestination.

Peter speaks of Jesus being foreknown before the beginning of the world and is just now made known.

1 Peter 1:20, *“He was foreknown [proginosko προγινώσκω] before the foundation of the world but was manifested in these last times for your sake”*

We witnessed before how Peter was addressing the Jews in his epistle whom he states to be elect according to God’s knowing beforehand.

Therefore, when we come to Romans 8 we ought not to jump to the Calvinistic definition, but to the God-foreknew-the-Jews definition.

Romans 8:28-30, *“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew [proginosko προγινώσκω], He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined these He also called; whom He called...”*

Even the act of calling we find spoken of concerning Israel in the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 43:1, *“But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine.”*
(see also: Isaiah 54:6; 1 Peter 1:15; 2:9; 5:10)

In so far as we Gentiles are grafted into the olive tree, then we share in the common purpose that God has for His elect, the Jews.

Romans 11:17, *“You, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree,”*

The Remaining Verses of Election

There remain several verses that speak of the elect in the New Testament. Considering all that we have studied we can confidently know that they have nothing to do with the Calvinistic idea of predestined to salvation or damnation. Furthermore, in almost all the cases, understanding them to be a reference to the Jews, God’s chosen people, is warranted.

Let us briefly consider those remaining. When Jesus spoke of God avenging in **Luke 18:7**, *“His own elect who cry out day and night to Him,”* Jesus was talking about the Jews.

Romans 16:13, *“Rufus, chosen in the Lord,”*

may be speaking of him being Jewish. This would make the most sense given that of the many other (obviously) believing brothers and sisters in the chapter, only Rufus is called elect.

Why would Paul refer to only him as being elect, if the Calvinistic definition of election were true?

Were the others not also heirs of eternal life?

Understanding that elect/election is not salvation and is generally a reference to the Jews the passage makes complete sense.

It must be noted that Priscilla and Aquila, from Rome, were also Jewish and yet were not called elect.

Could it be that because Paul had nothing else to say about Rufus that he simply stated that he was chosen/elect in the Lord?

Ephesians 1:4, *“just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,*

This ought to be viewed considering the chosen people, Israel. We know that Paul travelled to Ephesus and there spent three months reasoning with the Jews in the synagogues (Acts 19:1-8). Thus, Ephesians seems to be once again, for “the Jew first and then the Gentile” paradigm.

Colossians 3:12, *Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;*

The mention of elect here in Colossians is probably also a reference to Jews.

Colossae was in Asia (minor) and we also know that Paul first entered the local synagogue wherever he went in order to persuade the Jews first. Thus, his letter to the Colossians, located in Asia is most likely a letter written in the principle of “Jews first and after that the Gentiles.”

This is confirmed by looking at the Jews present on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 2:5-11, *And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. ⁶And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. ⁷Then they were all amazed and marvelled, saying to one another, “Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? ⁸And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? ⁹Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.”*

The letter to the Thessalonians is also a letter to the Jews first and then the Gentiles. In **Acts 17:1-2**, *Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ² Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,*

With this in mind, we can see why Paul would saying **1 Thessalonians 1:2 & 4**, *“we give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers... knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.*

Once again, election is not Calvinistic in its definition, but Jewish. Likewise, in **Titus 1:1** Paul speaks of the faith of God’s elect which very possibly was a reference to the faith of the Jewish people.

When Apostle John wrote in his second letter at **2 John1:1**, *“the elect lady and her children...”* The term elect would point to a reference to someone ethnically Jewish. The salutation also points to someone who is ethnically Jewish.

2 John 1:13, *“The children of your elect sister greet you.”*

The final mention of the elect is found in Revelation 17.

Revelation 17:14, *“These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.”*

We have seen that the elect and chosen does not refer to the Calvinistic concept of election. We have also seen that elect in the New Testament almost always refers to Israelites. When the Lord Jesus comes back his entourage will absolutely include Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their seed. The question, however, is will Gentiles also be among that group?

Given the fact that we Gentiles are grafted into Israel (Romans 11:24) and enjoy blessings that come with that, we can be confident that we will be in that number returning with the Lord.

Conclusion

We thus come to the end of our study having seen that elect and election have nothing to do with salvation, predestined to eternal life or death, nor any Calvinistic definition whatsoever.

God elected priests, kings, disciples, Messiah, angels, and Jerusalem all of which had nothing to do with being predestined to salvation.

We also saw that elected/chosen was used of foolish things and of false gods (on man's part) again, the term had nothing to do with being predestined to salvation.

We came to the election of Israel and saw that in no less than eight verses in the Old Testament God declared Israel to be His elect!

When we turned to the New Testament we could see that elect/election/chosen never was there as a reference to being predestined to salvation.

In fact, nearly every reference of the elect was to Israel.

We looked at the elect in the tribulation and saw that it was speaking of the Jews.

We looked at the epistles of Peter and found the mention there of elect was to the Jews.

We looked at the book of Romans and again, the Jews were the elect.

We examined the remaining verses that spoke of election or God's choosing and found that they more than likely refer to Israel as the elect.

Finally, we considered the term foreknowledge/foreknow and found that it is not a salvific term but simply God or even man, knowing something in advance.

With all that we have seen we must therefore conclude that elect is not salvation.

Election has nothing to do with salvation or damnation. It is simply God or man making a choice.

However, the term “the elect” is often, a reference to Israel/Jews, who are of course God’s chosen people.

The New Testament references of the elect are never speaking one’s eternal destiny but of God having chosen someone for a particular purpose.

In almost all the New Testament references, the elects are in fact the Jews!

It turns out that the New Testament is more Jewish-centred than most of us ever imagined!

The epistles of Paul, James, Peter, Hebrews and John are written to the Jew first and then the Gentiles.

Personally, I am quite satisfied that God’s plans centre around Israel; we Gentile believers have been grafted in which is good enough for me.