

# Bryan Station Baptist Church

INDEPENDENT ESTABLISHED 1786 MISSIONARY

# THE PIONEER BAPTIST

*"Preaching The Same Truth We Preached Before Kentucky Was A State"*

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## PREDESTINATION

## PROPHECY

## PROVIDENCE

By DR. C. D. COLE,

*"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated, according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1:11).*

**T**HE three Bible words in the above caption express closely related doctrines, which find support in the above text. Since knowledge begins with definition, I shall begin with a definition of terms. Predestination may be defined as the purpose of God from eternity respecting future events. Prophecy is a declaration or revelation of future events and human actions. Providence is the work of God bringing to pass in history what is predestinated in eternity and prophesied in time. These three doctrines are based upon the will of God. And so we read that He "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will".

We might put it like this: Predestination is the eternal determination or purpose of the Divine will; Prophecy is the revelation of the Divine will; and Providence is the execution of the Divine will.

This raises the question as to who or what is running this world. In answer to this question, there are four schools of thought. One school says that all things come to pass by a fixed law—the law of nature. According to this view, the Creator made the world, as a man might make a clock and wind it up, leaving it to run by itself without outside interference. The only part God has in world affairs is to allow it to run by natural and moral laws He Himself gave. This view rejects all miracles and believes only what can be accounted for on so-called scientific grounds. The second school says that things happen by a sort of chance; that nothing is fixed or determined, and that one thing is as likely to happen as another. The third school believes that everything comes to pass by a cold, impersonal force called fate. And finally there is the Bible and Christian view that all things come to pass by

a Divine will called Providence; that is, by the administration of a wise, loving, and Almighty God. The God Who created, sustains and rules to the praise of His own glory, and for the good of His people.

In our English Bible the word "providence" occurs only once: Acts 24:2. Here it refers to the government or administration of Felix the Roman governor of Judea. The apostle Paul is on trial before Felix, charged by the Jews with the crime of insurrection, and as being a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes. Ananias, chief priest, and the elders bring with them a lawyer Tertullus, who prosecutes the case against Paul. But before pressing his case, Tertullus flatters the governor by saying, "Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness" (Acts 24:2, 3). What flattery and lying! During the administration of Felix, revolts in the nation were common and continuous, culminating in the final revolt that ended in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

While the word "providence" here refers to the rule of Felix over Judea, the word is much more applicable to the sovereign rule of God Whose kingdom is over all and from everlasting to everlasting.

### SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

(1) While the Divine decrees and prophecies make a thing certain, there is no external force used in bringing it to pass. When an evil deed is predicted of someone, providence is not an external force that compels the act.

We can never truthfully say that man had to sin as far as external force is concerned. God never forces anyone to sin; on the other hand He gives commandments and warnings and inducements not to sin. Nor can any man or group of men force another man to sin. If you should take me by physical force, place a gun in my hand, and by force compel me to pull the trigger, resulting in the death of someone, I would not be guilty of murder, or even a misdemeanor.

(2) Let it be remembered and understood once for all that sin resides in the human heart—sin must be in the heart before it can be in the hand. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matt. 15:19). And let us also remember that God never put sin in the human heart. How it got there is a profound mystery. God made man in His own image and likeness and pronounced him good. In the mystery of the Divine administration, the first man sinned and lost the image of God in holiness. And the whole human race fell in the fall of the first Adam (Rom. 5:12-19). ". . . God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Eccl. 7:29). God is never the Author or cause of sin.

(3) In bringing sinful deeds to pass all God does is to leave men to themselves to do what is already in their hearts. "Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14:16). It is frightening to think that God may again abandon whole nations to their own ways. In Romans, chapter one, Paul describes the moral degeneration of the Gentile (heathen) nations. First, men held down or suppressed the truth about God in the book of nature. Pretending to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into various images as objects of worship. There was the Apollo of the Greeks, the eagle of the Romans, the sacred bull of the Egyptians, and the serpent of the Assyrians. And God gave them up to degenerate from bad to worse. And the chapter closes with a long list of sins that are prevalent in our day, even here in so-called Christian America. It makes one shudder to scan the prophetic horizon. In Genesis 6:11 we read that the earth was filled with violence in the days of Noah just preceding the flood, and in Matthew 24:37 we are told that these same conditions shall prevail just before our Lord returns in judgment. The masses will be so occupied with temporal and material matters that the judgment will take them unawares. Now back to our main thought; namely, that the eternal purposes and Scriptural prophecies make the predicted evils certain without imposing any necessity to do wrong upon anyone. God's sovereignty and man's responsibility are both true, although we may not be able to reconcile them.

#### SOME ILLUSTRATIONS AND EXAMPLES OF OUR MAIN THEME

(1) Take the case of Judas Iscariot who was to betray Jesus. This was first predicted in Psalm 41:9, and quoted by Jesus in John 13:18: "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." Our Lord is here saying that He knew what He was doing when He chose Judas to be an apostle; He did it to make certain the fulfilment of Scripture. When Peter made his confession for the twelve, saying, ". . . we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus corrected him by saying unto them (the twelve), "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" And John tells us that he was speaking of Judas Iscariot who should betray him (Jno. 6:69-71). At the feast of the Passover, Jesus identified His betrayer by giving him the sop (Jno. 13:26). If Judas

had not betrayed Jesus, both the Psalmist and the Saviour would have been found liars. And yet nobody made Judas do that awful deed; he did it of his own free will and accord. He was simply giving expression to what was already in his heart. Our Lord chose Judas because nobody but a devil would do what he did.

(2) Consider a few of the many prophecies concerning the death of Messiah. These predictions made the death of Christ certain in many and minute details. The very first prophecy was in Genesis 3:15 where the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head, and have his heel bruised. In Galatians 3:13 Paul quotes Deuteronomy 21:23 to indicate that the Christ would die by crucifixion, the Roman method of capital punishment. This necessitated a change of government, for if Jesus had been put to death by Jewish law, he would have been stoned. In Psalm 22 we have the cry of anguish (v. 1); the cruelty of the crowds (vv. 12, 17); and the parting of His garments and gambling for His vesture (v. 18). And all these predictions were fulfilled at the place called Calvary. In Isaiah 53 we see the Messiah as despised and rejected of men, as being smitten of God, as making His grave with the wicked and with the rich in His death, as being satisfied with the result of His sufferings, and as praying for His enemies. Behold the mystery of Divine Providence in the fulfillment of all these predictions some 700 years later at Calvary. In John 12:32 Jesus Himself predicted the manner and result of His death: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me. This He said, signifying what death he should die." In John, chapter ten, He speaks of Himself as the Good Shepherd giving His life for His sheep, and predicting that His sheep would hear His voice and follow Him and receive everlasting life. In His prayer as High Priest, recorded in John 17, Jesus acknowledges that the Father had given Him authority over all flesh so that He might give eternal life to all the Father gave Him, and that while He was on earth He had kept those given to Him so that not one of them was lost. And then He says that the son of perdition was lost that the Scripture might be fulfilled. Now in the gospel accounts of the death of Christ we see all these Scriptures fulfilled, everything coming to pass by Divine Providence.

And in the book of Acts, Luke the historian, confirms the fulfilment of these prophecies. In Acts 2:23 he says this: "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel (will) and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Here we have God's will or purpose in the death of Christ being carried out by wicked hands. Nobody was forced to crucify Christ, men acted of their own free will and revealed the fact that the carnal mind is enmity against God. And the Lord Jesus was God wrapped in human flesh. In Acts 4:26 we have a quotation from the second Psalm, with this comment: "For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done." Here we have predestination (the determination or purpose of the Divine will), and providence (the execution of the Divine will) in the crucifixion of Christ. Politicians and religionists were doing God's will, but their motive was not to carry out His will. They were simply acting out what was in their heart. God did not put the evil in their heart, but He did control and direct everything they did for the accomplishment of His eternal purpose in Christ. The human motive was bad, but God overruled it all for the salvation of sinners and to the praise of His grace. Here is one of many places where God makes the wrath of man to praise Him, and preventing that which would not (Ps. 76:10).

Because of the overruling providence of God, what Joseph's brethren did in selling him into slavery was attributed to God Himself. When Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and they realized what they had done, they began to weep and be afraid. He comforts them by telling them that the hand of God was in it all for the salvation of human lives. "So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God" (Gen. 45:8). And in Genesis 50:20 we learn that what made the difference in the Divine will and the human deed was in the motive. Joseph says to his brothers, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." And so what came to pass at Calvary was overruled to save many sinners from eternal punishment in hell.

To God be the glory! great things He hath done:  
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son;  
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,  
And opened the Life-gate that all may go in.

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,  
To every believer the promise of God;  
The vilest offender who truly believes,  
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath  
done,  
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;  
But purer, and higher, and greater will be  
Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.

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### THE LITTLE CHAP WHO FOLLOWS ME

*A careful man I ought to be;  
A little fellow follows me;  
I do not dare to go astray  
For fear he'll go the selfsame way.*

*I cannot once escape his eyes,  
Whate'er he sees me do, he tries;  
Like me, he says, he's going to be,  
The little chap who follows me.*

*He thinks that I am good and fine,  
Believes in every word of mine  
The base in me he must not see,  
The little chap who follows me.*

*I must remember as I go,  
Through summer's fun and winter's snow,  
I'm building for the years to be  
The little chap who follows me!*

—Copied.