

Eschatology and Calvinism **(Plot Holes You Can Drive a Truck Through Part 2)** Isaiah Roman

In part one of this series the logical holes in Calvinism as compared to scripture were displayed through examining the necessary logical “hoops” one has to invent to jump through when adhering to the five points of T.U.L.I.P. These discrepancies cause one to necessarily justify seeming contradictions in scriptural passages where discrepancies don’t exist.

For instance, in the book of Ephesians Paul explains to the reader that:

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies with Christ, ⁴ according as He chose us in Him before *the* foundation of *the* world, for us to be holy and without blemish before Him in love, ⁵ predestinating us to adoption through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, – Ephesians 1:3-5

The Calvinist looks at this passage and says “you see, we were predestined by God to salvation before the ‘foundation of the world.’” In a sense, this line of thinking is both true, and false. This is very much like the establishment of the separation of church and state.

Those who are proponents of the separation quote the first amendment, which says in part: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;” They are quick to point out that government should make no law respecting religion, but they are not so quick to follow that statement with the continuing clause “nor prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Judges who rule in favor of separation are, in actuality, prohibiting the free exercise of religion, in favor of the practice of non-religion, which in turn is endorsing a second religion; atheism.

So, what does this passage say if not that we are predestined? Well, it says that we are predestined... in Him. The passage says emphatically “chose us in Him” and “without blemish before Him” and in case we may have forgotten Paul writes yet again “through Jesus Christ to Himself.” Calvinists stop with “predestinating us to adoption.” What remains is the quantification that Paul added three separate times “in Him,” “before Him” and “through Jesus Christ...”

One of the most famous Calvinist examples is found in Romans 8:

because whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be the First-born among many brothers. But whom He predestinated, these He also called; and whom He called, these he also justified; but whom He justified, these He also glorified. – Romans 8:29-30

However, once again we see the very same pattern as the one displayed in Ephesians; “predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, for Him...” But, unless someone thinks that I am twisting scripture around to suit a particular purpose, let’s examine the other scriptures about predestination:

¹³ But we ought to thank God always concerning you, brothers, beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, ¹⁴ to which He called you through our gospel, to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So, then, brothers, stand firm and strongly hold the teachings you were taught, whether by word or by our letter. – II Thessalonians 2:13-14

⁹ making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, ¹⁰ for the administration of the fullness of the times *to head up all things in Christ*, both the things in the heavens, and the things on earth, *in Him*, ¹¹ in whom we also have been chosen to an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of the One working all things according to the counsel of His own will, ¹² for us to be to the praise of His glory, the ones who had previously trusted in Christ; – Ephesians 1:9-12

²² Men, Israelites, hear these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man from God, having been approved among you by powerful deeds and wonders and miracles, which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know, ²³ this One given to you by the before-determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, *you having taken by lawless hands, having crucified Him*, you put Him to death. – Acts 2:22-23

²² But if God, desiring to show forth wrath, and to make His power known, endured in much long-suffering vessels of wrath having been fitted out for destruction, ²³ and that He make known the riches of His glory on vessels of mercy which He before prepared for glory, – Romans 9:22-23

Each one of these verses talks about the fact that God predestined our salvation. This predestination is true, just as it is true that the Constitution says that Congress shall make no law respecting religion. But what these verses also say is that our predestination was not in us, for us, or by us. Rather, it says very clearly that our predestination was in Christ, for Christ, and by Christ. In fact, Paul spends the entire section now titled chapter 5 of Romans explaining this thought. The subtle difference between the Bible and Calvinism is that Jesus was predestined before the dawn of time to be our salvation, and that we, through His predestination, are now called by God to salvation.

Does God have perfect foreknowledge of who will, and who will not be saved? Absolutely. Does God call to those who will be saved? Absolutely. Is God the one who chooses who will and will not be saved? Absolutely. However, the idea that God would, before the dawn of time, construct a cosmic naughty and nice list, then pick out those on the nice list

to the exclusion of the naughty must assume that God predetermined who would go to Hell as well as who would go to Heaven. By what criteria was this decision made?

If indeed we are born in sin, and have no hope of redemption then babies necessarily will go to Hell if they die before they reach the age of ascension. In fact, all persons who are mentally handicapped and cannot understand the scriptures are necessarily hell-bound. But, what about the scripture that says the sins of the father will not be visited on the son? What about the mercy of God for those who cannot understand? The answer is there is none. They deserve Hell, because of the sin of Adam.

In other words, God is both the author of good and evil. God not only knew that Adam would sin, but actually caused the circumstances by which he would sin. God not only knows that there are those who would not be saved, but actually precluded them from ever having chance of being saved.

To be honest, the Calvinist will dance around this logical flaw by saying that because God knew that these poor lost people would never choose to follow Him anyway, He simply pre-marked their names in the loss column and moved along.

This is how Calvinism attempts to escape the single logical outworking of predestination; God determines the saved, and the unsaved. But if this is true, then God must have known and accepted abortion, fratricide, euthanasia of the mentally retarded and a host of other ills. If, after all, these people were destined for Hell anyway how is it possible for God to judge us for any of these sins? For that matter, if we're once saved always saved, then why pray the Lord's prayer? Why pray at all?

If instead we look at this as though God knew who would and would not be saved, but desired that everyone should be saved and to allow for everyone's salvation He predestined the Christ to come into the world to provide the ability for everyone to be saved we have an entirely different God. If, instead we look at this as though each person has the choice to be saved, but some simply will not to say yes, then we have a God who remains righteous, and a people who can become innocent.

If we see that God knew sin would exist, but allowed the choice for evil, then we see that God's plan for salvation through predestinating the Christ works to the benefit, and condemnation of all mankind; describing "the kindness and severity of God: On those having fallen, severity. But on you, kindness, if you continue in the kindness. Otherwise, you will also be cut off."

In fact, this type of God is the God that the Bible describes. The passages which tell us that "God so loved the world" and "whosoever believes" and "that all should come to repentance" are not quantified with "but just aren't going to make it." Rather, the character of God's justice is always describes as mankind breaks God's covenant, and God must judge mankind. Even in Romans 8 where it tells us that no power can remove us from God's hand, it does not mention the idea that we cannot remove ourselves from God's hand. It merely states that no outside influence will cause God to release His promise to

us. This describes the singular character of God; He is righteous and will not forsake His promises. It also describes the singular character of man; we are “desperately wicked” and will usually break our promises.

But wait, what about the first passage quoted from II Thessalonians 2. There is no quantification in that passage about whether or not we were predestined “in Him.” That’s true, but it does say this: “So, then, brothers, stand firm and strongly hold the teachings you were taught, whether by word or by our letter.” Why the quantification? Why is it necessary for us to be concerned with making sure that we “strongly hold the teachings” if we’re predestined to be saved? After all, if we’re going to be saved, and there’s nothing we can do about it, then wouldn’t God either a) prevent us from sinning, or b) forgive us for any sin we may commit?

Rather, if we understood that God does forgive sins, but expects us to be on our best behavior, not because it’s just the right thing to do, but because there is a covenant expectation that we’ll hold up our end of the bargain, then you have just described what the Bible has to say about every single covenant God has made every single time He’s made one throughout all history. (See Dispensationalism and Calvinism)

One view of salvation avoids logical traps, the other engenders them.

But if Calvinism isn’t right, then why do people follow it? While there are many reasons for the establishment of Calvinism, there is certainly one prime reason for its continued acceptance in the modern age. Calvinism is the Christian “Easy Button.”

If you’re “saved” and you sin, it’s no big deal, God will forgive you. If you don’t want to live your life singly dedicated to God, seeking perfection in His will, then it’s no big deal because God’s going to sanctify you and free you from sin when you die. All you have to do is say the sinner’s prayer and you’re wrapped up in Saran wrap, sealed in a Zip-Lock bag and tucked away neatly in a freezer, awaiting the final thaw at the rapture.

Calvinism starts out as a subtle discrepancy between itself and Christianity. There are - to be sure - many good, decent Christians who have fallen into, or been raised into Calvinism. Just like Catholicism, there are certainly many born-again Calvinists, but Calvinism itself is not Christianity.

So, before I go a step further it is important to say that while we cannot say that a Calvinist is doomed to Hell for their beliefs, nor that they are in some way not Christian because they disagree with the Bible, we can say that Calvinistic beliefs are heretical.

So, what does all of this have to do with the study of the end-times? Because when you shoot at the moon, you have to be dead accurate if you’re going to hit it.

If you were to stand outside of Earth’s gravity and shoot a bullet at the moon, it would be more difficult to hit than you might think. First, you’re moving. Second, the moon is

moving. Third, the bullet is moving. If you're off by more than a fraction of a degree, or a tenth of a second, you may very well miss a planetoid-sized celestial entity.

This is the problem that Calvinism causes with eschatology. Because you have to believe in either dispensationalism or dualism, you have to interpret end-times scripture in a particular way. For instance, in dispensationalism there is a particularly troubling passage in Revelations 7, and again in 14. This passage talks about 144,000 "not defiled with women" who may be a compilation of 12,000 from each tribe of Israel.

To put the cap on dispensationalism Calvinists will point to this passage and use it as a reasoning for explaining that the Israelites were not cut off, but rather that they remain God's people, thus bolstering the idea that once you're chosen, you can't be unfrozen.

There are some serious problems with this concept, but I've already covered most of those problems in part 1 of this series. The main point is that one of the major out-workings of dispensational thought is zionism. The idea is that in the end times, God will establish Israel for the sake of the Israelites.

Once again, this thought process puts the focus not on God, but on men. The underlying theme of Calvinism is that God has done everything that He has done for man's benefit. The Bible teaches us that God has done everything He has done for His benefit. The only reason God has fulfilled His promises to men is so that His justice and grace can abound.

19 and we have the more established prophetic word, in which you do well to take heed, as to a lamp shining in a murky place, until day dawns and the Day-star rises in your hearts; 20 knowing this first, that every prophecy of Scripture did not come into being of its own interpretation; 21 for prophecy was not at any time borne by the will of man, but having been borne along by the Holy Spirit, holy men of God spoke. – II Peter 1:19,20

Prophecy does not come singly to one person. Prophecy comes to all men, through several sources. Unless all prophecy is consistent with all other prophecy, then it is not true prophecy.

In Revelations it says:

...the dragon was enraged over the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, those keeping the commandments of God, and having the testimony of Jesus Christ. – Revelations 12:17

The woman "having been clothed with the sun, and the moon was underneath her feet; and on her head a crown of the twelve stars;" refers specifically to Mary, the mother of Jesus, who was clothed in the righteousness of the Holy Spirit, stood above the false worshipers of her day, and was the product of the pure lineage of Israel.

This *does not* infer that we worship Mary, or in any way reverence her beyond acknowledging that she was the birth-mother of Jesus. Rather, it is a symbol of the beginnings of the Church. For further clarification of the depth of the symbology surrounding the birth and death of the Christ, I suggest you obtain the video "The Star of Bethlehem" documentary produced by Stephen McEveety.

In Zephaniah 3:13 it says "The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies. And a deceitful tongue shall not be found in their mouth. For they shall feed and lie down, and no one shall frighten *them*."

In John 3:3 says "And everyone having this hope on Him purifies himself even as that *One* is pure" and in verse 6 says "Everyone remaining in Him does not sin. Everyone sinning has not seen Him, nor known Him."

In I Peter 2: 9-10 it says "But you are "an elect race," "a royal priesthood," "a holy nation," "a people for possession," so that "you may openly speak of the virtues" of the *One* who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; (*LXX-Ex. 23:22; MT-Ex. 19:5,6*) *you who then were "not a people, but now are the people" of God; "the one not pitied then but now pitied."* (*Hos. 1:6, 9 2:1,23*)

Those 144,000 saved from the tribes of Israel may, or may not actually be Israelites. They may actually be, as Paul tells us, the tribes made whole through the "grafting in" of the saints. The 144,000 are described as virgins, untouched by women. They do not fear. They are the children of the woman cloaked in the sun. These people, whoever they are, are considered pure and undefiled, as a virgin before their wedding. This is yet another analogy used by Jesus to describe the Church.

The reference from Zephaniah about having no fear is another theme of the new testament found in I John 4:18 when He tells us that fear is present in those who have not "been perfected in love." Who are those who have been perfected in love if not God's people?

Jesus, the Christ tells us as well in John 4:22-23 "22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is of the Jews. 23 *But an hour is coming, and now is*, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father also seeks such *ones* that worship Him." Once again we see that salvation was of the Jews and then Jesus adds the all important "but..."

The 144,000 are certainly not guaranteed to be a remnant of Israel left for the end times, but that doesn't mean they aren't either. Paul is quick to point out that those of the Jews who return to God through the Christ will be grafted back in. They are after all, the "natural branches."

So if these 144,000 may, or may not be a real remnant of genetic Israelites, then who is it that now seeks to solidify the land of Israel as an inheritance, and who is trying desperately to re-establish temple worship? The answer is simple: the Jews who are not Jews.

There have been Jews who are Christians in Jerusalem since the time of Jesus. If you are looking for a remnant of the children of Abraham as God promised, then start there. However, what we find now is a group of people from Eastern Europe and Southern Russia who have laid claim to the nation now called Israel. These people were also prophesied long, long ago:

³ Do not let anyone deceive you *in any way*, because *that Day will not come unless first comes the falling away, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,* ⁴ *the one opposing and exalting himself over everything being called God, or object of worship, so as for him "to sit in the temple of God" as God, proclaiming that he himself is God.* (*Dan. 11:36; Eze. 28:2*) – II Thessalonians 2:3-4

⁹ *Behold, I give out of the synagogue of Satan those saying themselves to be Jews, and they are not, but they lie...* – Revelations 3:9a

There are anti-zionist organizations within the Jewish community who proclaim that God's grace extends to all mankind. They are correct. Unfortunately for the zionist God's grace was extended only through the predestinated person of the Christ. But who are these people, and how can we know who they really are?

At the time of the Christ's coming there were thousands of people who flocked to Him, knowing that He was the messiah. On Monday He entered Jerusalem to a triumphant throng of worshippers casting palm fronds in front of Him. By Friday He was hanging on a cross, suffering for the sins of mankind. Why?

There are the obvious reasons, but the practical reason why the Jews allowed Him to be sacrificed was because He failed to do what they wanted Him to do; He failed to reestablish the kingdom of Heaven on Earth, through the Jews. This is why the Jews refused to recognize Jesus as the Christ, and why they refuse to accept Him still today. The Jews are looking for a social-political leader who will come and set up the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, and put His throne in Jerusalem, forever sealing the Israelites as His heirs.

Revelations 2:9 says "I know your works, and the affliction, and the poverty; but you are rich. And *I know* the evil speaking of those saying themselves to be Jews, and they are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan."

When the Israelites asked for a King, Samuel refused (I Samuel 8:6) until God made him repent, and accept their request. In fact God had already given Samuel a prophecy of the destruction of Israel (I Samuel 3:11-13) God, at that time, warned the people that a king would ruin their nation and that they would become corrupt. The kingdom age of Israel was not the height of Israeli achievement, it was the long slide to destruction. However, those who seek power and influence see this era as the height of power and righteousness.

Those people who seek to reestablish Israel today are not true children of God, just as those who rejected Jesus in Jerusalem 2000 years ago are not true children of God. (See the series on The Socialization of America) They are “a synagogue of Satan” and they seek to provide a place for their messiah, who they believe has not yet come, to set up his throne. They will get what they ask for. It will be the “son of perdition” and they will finally realize what it is that they have done to themselves and to the world.

Will they then be saved? Will this be the remnant of God’s people who He will reserve to Himself? To say that they could not be saved is to state a lie. To say that they definitely will be saved is yet another lie. We simply don’t know. All prophecy is revealed to us through the glass of history.

As these events unfold, we will recognize them for what they are, but only if we have good telemetry.

This is the reason for such a lengthy apologetic against Calvinism. What’s the big deal if I have one view of Revelation and you have another? It’s simple; Christianity has no “Easy Button.”

So, then, my beloved, even as you always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much rather in my absence, cultivate your salvation with fear and trembling, – Philippians 2:12

My concern is not necessarily those who are born-again, but rather those who are taught by those who are born-again and more importantly, those who yet remain to be taught. When we begin to deviate from Truth we leave ourselves vulnerable to attack by our enemy, and cause others to miss the mark of salvation. We are commanded to cultivate, to work out our salvation. In order for us to hit the mark, we have to be aiming at the right target, and make sure that we take all factors into consideration. because if no other thing is true:

...narrow is the gate, and constricted is the way that leads away into life, and few are the ones who find it. – Matthew 7:14