

Q. Did God deliberately reprobate the non-elect to hell or did He merely pass them by? Also, is the difference really a big deal?

A. I appreciate your good question. What you are asking about is what people often term the difference between predestination and double-predestination. Those who believe only in the predestination of the elect to be saved (for the sake of clarity, I'll call it single-predestination) say that God in eternity elected some to be saved. They say that God simply passed over the rest of humanity, leaving them in their sins. Thus, they are condemned by their own sinfulness.

Well, certainly they are condemned by their own sinfulness. But what single-predestination people have never successfully explained is how God's passing the rest over is any less an active choice of God than God's reprobating them. Did God simply make a mistake when He passed over these people? Just what does passing over mean if it does not mean actively putting them into a category of reprobation?

Those who believe in double-predestination say that God in eternity elected some to be saved and that by this choice, logically, He also reprobated the rest of humanity to be damned. In my booklet on limited atonement, I use the analogy of a ship's captain:

To illustrate my point, suppose I am the captain of a ship. The ship is sinking in icy waters in which no one can survive for more than an hour. The nearest rescue ship is three hours away. There are only enough lifeboats for the women and children. As captain, I determine that only the women and children will be allowed into the lifeboats. By making this decision, I have not only decided that the women and children will be saved, but I have also decided that all of the men will perish.

Of course, God has much more control over the situation than a ship's captain. To make the analogy more complete, we would have to say that the captain also made the ship and the ocean and the people, and he also decided before

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doublepredestinationqa.pdf

the ship even sailed that it would sink and whom he would save and whom he would not. The point is this: By deciding whom He will save, God has also decided whom He will not save.

For a further explanation of double-predestination, you can print the booklet on limited atonement from this page: http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/wohg_010.htm

Those who disagree with double-predestination are afraid that it makes God the author of sin. But, as I explain here (<http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/godhardensQA.htm>), God can reprobate and harden the hearts of the reprobate. He is the ultimate cause of everything. But He is not the author of sin because only the sinner is the author of his sin.

Those who hold to single predestination often resort to Romans 9:22-23: "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." They point out that the word "fitted" (*katērtismena*) in verse 22 is passive, and that "afore prepared" (*proētoimasen*) in verse 23 is active. Then they say something like John MacArthur does here:

Here you have an active verb in verse 23, God actively preparing vessels of mercy for glory, you have a passive verb in verse 22, you have certain vessels of wrath that were prepared for destruction, God is not the actor, He receives the action. So God never takes the responsibility for damnation, except for the fact that He will be the judge and the executor, but He is not responsible for the unbelief. So you don't have double predestination.
<http://www.scribd.com/doc/32396377/Bible-Questions-and-Answers-Part-42-Rev-John-MacArthur>

But MacArthur has erred. The passive verb in verse 22 does not tell us who did the action. But it also does not tell us who did NOT do the action. In other words, it is impossible from this evidence to validly draw the conclusion, "So you don't have double predestination." Further, MacArthur and the single-predestination advocates ignore the first part of verse 22 that shows God actively willing, showing, making known, and enduring. While it is not conclusive, this is evidence in support of the view that it is also God who fitted the vessels of wrath

for destruction. Even more, why are they "vessels of wrath"? In other words, these two verses show us a distinction in category. There are two categories of people: "vessels of wrath" and "vessels of mercy." Surely, we can assume that these categories came about in an equal manner. If God chose some upon which to be merciful then He must also have chosen some upon which to be wrathful. And is this not double-predestination?

But there is better evidence. Those who hold to single-predestination need to start reading in verse 21: "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" The word "make" (*poiēsai*) here is active. And it applies equally to both the "vessel unto honour" and the vessel "unto dishonour." Here, right at the beginning—at the "lump" stage—the potter, who is a picture of God, makes a choice. From that lump, He makes a vessel to honor and a vessel to dishonor. These are deliberate, active choices on the potter's—God's—part. In fact, the parallel between this verse and verses 22-23 is so striking, that it should be obvious that the potter's vessels of honor and dishonor here are a picture of God's vessels of wrath and mercy in verses 22-23. Since we see here the potter purposefully making a vessel to honor and from the same lump making a vessel to dishonor, we must conclude that in verses 22-23, we are supposed to see that God has likewise made one vessel to mercy and another vessel to wrath. This is double-predestination.

Notice something else here. The lump is not a dishonorable lump. That is, God is not saving some out of a sinful lump. The lump is neutral, and from that lump, He makes some vessels of honor/mercy and some vessels of dishonor/wrath. I don't see how anyone can really get around this. It makes God totally sovereign.

Notice also that God has appointed some to disobedience and condemnation: "Even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed" (I Peter 2:8), and, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation" (Jude 4). And, "The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Proverbs 16:4).

The difference between single- and double-predestination is a big deal because those who hold to single-predestination are logically denying God's sovereignty. Of course, they usually say that they do believe in God's sovereignty and hold to the five points of Calvinism. But this is

an inconsistency. For example, what happens at the Cross? If there is a category of elect and a non-category of "all the rest who are passed by and not reprobated," where do the "passed by all the rest" stand in relation to the atonement? If salvation is possible only through Jesus, and if Jesus died only for the elect, then the condemnation of the "passed by all the rest" is certain. And since, surely, God knew even at the beginning that this would happen to them, then, by passing by them, He knew He was reprobating them to condemnation. Thus, limited atonement implies double-predestination. And single-predestination implies Amyraldianism, Fullerism, or Arminianism (all teach that in some way Christ died for the non-elect).

Notice in this quote how John MacArthur begins by rejecting double-predestination, saying it is not in the Bible (even though it is), and winds up sounding more like he believes in Amyraldianism, Fullerism, or Arminianism than he does Calvinism:

Well double predestination is the viewpoint that God in eternity past just basically laid out for all intents and purposes all of humanity that would ever be born and just said...Okay, you go to hell, you go to hell, you go to heaven, you go to hell, you go to heaven, you go to hell...and just went down the line. That's what is called double predestination. He predetermined some to salvation and He predetermined and selected some to damnation. That is not taught in the Bible and that's why I don't believe it.

What is taught in the Bible is that we are chosen for salvation. A good passage...nowhere in the Scripture does it say that God chooses people to be damned, no place, does not say that. In fact, the Old Testament says that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, none. Jesus said you will not come to Me that you might have life. Jesus sat and wept over the city of Jerusalem and said, "How oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her brood, but you would not come." And He wept. Isaiah said, "Oh everyone that thirsts come," Isaiah 55. Jesus said in John 6, "Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out, or turn away." The end of the book of Revelation says, "Whosoever will, let him come." Jesus said to the Jews, "If you will not...if you will not believe on Me, where I go you can never come," but He always ties damnation to unbelief, never to predestination...never to predestination, always to unbelief.

(ibid, ellipses in original)

Do you see how MacArthur is here misusing (I am not saying purposely misusing) Scriptures in the same way that Arminians misuse them to say that Jesus was sad that more people weren't coming to Him, even suggesting the possibility that anyone might come to Him, thus placing Jesus at odds with His Father and with his own statements in John 6? "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.... Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father" (John 6:44, 65). If only those who were drawn by the Father could go to Jesus, then why would Jesus' mourn over people not coming to Him? Of course, He would not. And He was not suggesting that anyone, even if non-elect, can be saved. He was simply stating facts: the non-elect will not come to Him, only the elect will come, and He will not turn them away. "Whosoever will" are those made willing by God. Those who thirst are given that thirst by God. MacArthur has completely misunderstood Matthew 23:37: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" I explain it here (<http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/mt2337qa.htm>).

And I am not saying that John MacArthur has purposely misused Scripture. As far as I know, John MacArthur is an honorable man and a brother in Christ. I am also not saying that John MacArthur holds to Amyraldianism, Fullerism, or Arminianism. All I am saying is that he sounds like he does when trying to explain predestination because his argument for single-predestination is logically the argument for Amyraldianism, Fullerism, and Arminianism.

So, you see, double-predestination is an important doctrine. Rejecting it weakens our understanding of God's sovereignty, weakens other doctrines, and makes teachers of the Word inconsistent and confusing in their teaching.

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