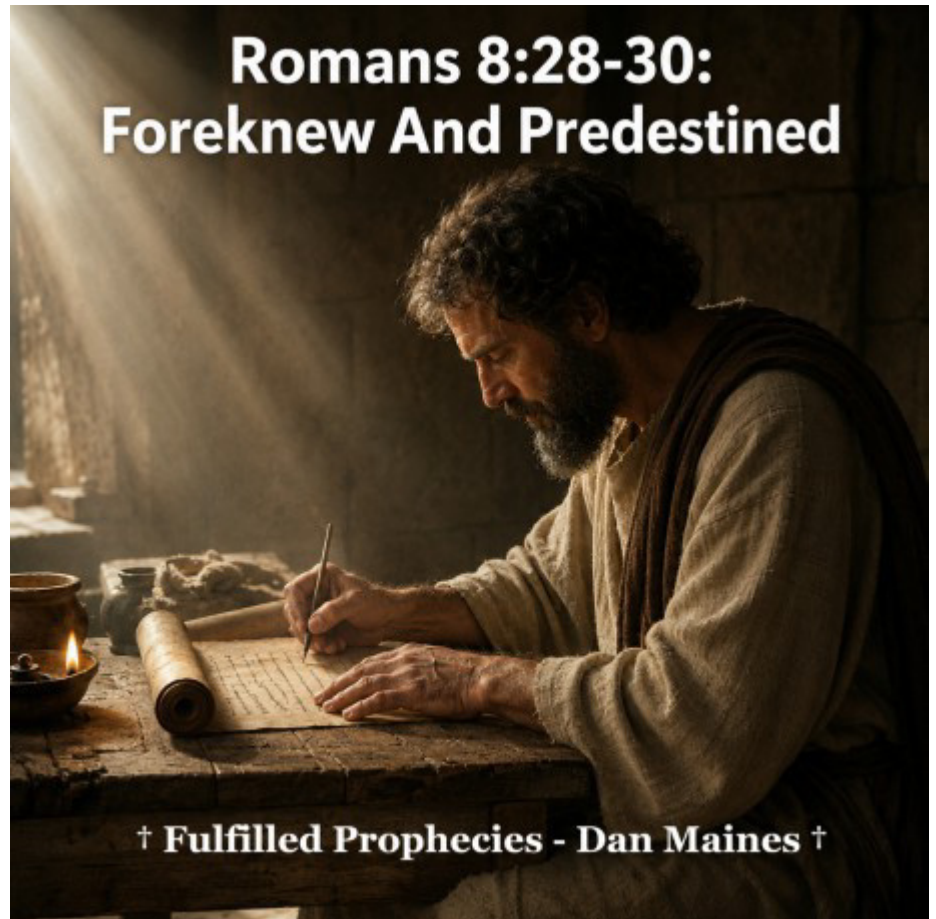


Fulfilled Prophecies

[Home](#) > [R](#) > [Share on Facebook](#)

[FACEBOOK LINK](#)

Romans 8:28-30: Foreknew And Predestined



By Dan Maines

Romans 8:28-30: Foreknew And Predestined

Introduction

† Romans 8:28-30 is often read as though Paul suddenly stopped talking about first-century Israel, suffering, covenant fulfillment, and the approaching glory, and began explaining that God predetermined the eternal destiny of every individual before creation.

† But Paul's argument didn't begin in Romans 8:28, and the words foreknew and predestined can't be separated from the covenant story Paul has been developing throughout Romans.

† The question isn't whether God foreknew and predestined. Paul clearly says that He did. The question is who Paul is talking about, what God foreknew, and what He predestined them for.

† Paul's focus is God's covenant people and His predetermined purpose to conform them to the image of His Son, bringing His people from the old creation in Adam into the new creation in Christ.

† Romans 8 is filled with first-century expectation. Paul spoke of sufferings that were not worthy to be compared with the glory about to be revealed, creation eagerly waiting, believers groaning within themselves, and their salvation being a matter of hope (Romans 8:18-25).

† Romans 8:28-30 describes the certainty of God's redemptive purpose. What God had promised concerning His covenant people would reach its intended goal.

Romans 8:28-30

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

† Notice Paul's emphasis, according to his purpose. The passage is about God's redemptive purpose and the certainty that He would accomplish what He had promised.

† Foreknew doesn't have to mean that God looked through eternity and selected particular individuals for heaven while passing over everyone else. Paul uses knowing language covenantally when discussing God's relationship with His people (Romans 11:1-2).

† What was predestined is stated directly in the passage, to be conformed to the image of his Son. Paul doesn't say here that certain individuals were predestined to believe while everyone

else was predestined to unbelief.

† The destination is conformity to Christ. God's predetermined purpose was that His covenant people would bear the image of His Son rather than remain identified with Adam and the old creation (1 Corinthians 15:48-49).

† Paul moves from foreknowledge to foreordination, calling, justification, and glorification because God's covenant purpose couldn't fail.

Romans 11:1-2

I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? Far from it! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?

† Paul gives us an important key to his use of foreknowledge. He speaks of Israel as his people which he foreknew.

† This isn't describing God choosing isolated individuals before creation for heaven or hell. It's covenant language describing a people God had known beforehand in His redemptive relationship with them.

† Paul wasn't saying every individual Israelite would be saved. Romans 11 distinguishes unbelieving branches from the believing remnant, yet Israel could still be described corporately as the people God foreknew (Romans 11:5, 17-23).

† That makes Romans 8:29 much easier to understand within Paul's larger argument. Foreknowledge concerns God's covenant purpose, not an arbitrary decree assigning individual eternal destinies.

Amos 3:1-2

Hear this word which the Lord has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt: "You only have I known among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your wrongdoing."

† God obviously knew that other nations existed. When He said that Israel alone had been known by Him, the meaning involved

covenant relationship, recognition, and election.

† This demonstrates why biblical knowing language can't automatically be reduced to knowing facts in advance.

† God had entered a unique covenant relationship with Israel, and that covenant relationship also brought covenant accountability.

† Paul's statement that God foreknew His people fits this established biblical pattern of covenant knowing (Romans 11:2).

Ephesians 1:4-5

just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

† Paul again connects predestination with a destination. God's purpose was adoption through Jesus Christ.

† The emphasis is in him. God's predetermined redemptive plan centered on Christ and the people who would be gathered into Him.

† Paul isn't describing a random plan created after Israel failed. God's purpose in Christ was established beforehand and unfolded through the covenant story.

† Predestination answers the question of God's intended goal for His people. They were destined for adoption and conformity to Christ (Romans 8:29).

Ephesians 1:9-11

He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He set forth in Him, regarding His plan of the fullness of the times, to bring all things together in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him we also have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things in accordance with the plan of His will,

† Once again Paul connects predestination with God's purpose in Christ.

† The mystery of God's will was being revealed and accomplished in Christ as the fullness of the times arrived.

† God's predetermined purpose was to bring His covenant plan to its intended completion in Christ, not to leave His people permanently divided between the old creation and the new.

† Romans 8:28 uses the same crucial idea, called according to his purpose. God's purpose is the controlling theme (Romans 8:28).

Romans 9:6-8

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but:

"through Isaac your descendants shall be named." That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

† Paul's discussion immediately following Romans 8 continues with the question of Israel and the faithfulness of God's word.

† God's covenant purpose wasn't failing because physical descent never guaranteed participation in the promise.

† Paul distinguishes fleshly descent from the children of promise. This is covenant election centered on God's purpose rather than human ancestry.

† Romans 8 through Romans 11 forms a connected argument about God's faithfulness, His covenant people, His purpose, and the fulfillment of His promises.

2 Timothy 1:8-10

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was granted to us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

† Paul again connects calling with God's purpose and grace in

Christ.

† The plan existed before its historical manifestation, but it was revealed through the appearing and work of Christ.

† This parallels Romans 8:28-30, where calling, justification, and glorification belong to God's unfolding redemptive purpose.

† God's purpose wasn't an emergency response to human failure. Christ stood at the center of the plan from the beginning.

Historical References

† Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Books 11-20, records the continuing history of the Jewish people and the covenant world into which Jesus and the apostles came.

† Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, Books 5-7, records the catastrophic end of Jerusalem and the temple system in AD 70, providing historical background for the first-century covenant transition surrounding Paul's ministry.

† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, chapters 5-7, connects the destruction of Jerusalem with the judgment that came upon that generation and records the early Christian understanding of Jerusalem's fall.

† These historical writers don't determine the meaning of Romans 8:28-30. Scripture determines its meaning, but history confirms the first-century covenant setting in which the apostles lived and taught.

How It Applies To Us Today

† Romans 8:28-30 gives us confidence that God's redemptive purpose in Christ didn't fail.

† We don't need to read foreknew and predestined as teaching that God created some individuals for salvation and others for condemnation before they were born.

† God's predetermined destination for His people was conformity to His Son. Christ is the pattern and goal of the new creation.

† We now live on the fulfilled side of that covenant transition. Our identity isn't found in the old creation, the earthly temple, physical ancestry, or the Mosaic covenant, but in Christ.

† God's completed covenant purpose gives us confidence today because the kingdom isn't waiting to arrive. Christ reigns, the New Covenant is established, and those in Christ participate in the life of His everlasting kingdom.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Does Romans 8:29 say God predestined certain individuals to heaven and everyone else to hell?

A: No. Paul says what they were predestined for, to be conformed to the image of His Son. The emphasis is God's predetermined purpose for His covenant people in Christ (Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:4-5).

Q: What does foreknew mean in Romans 8:29?

A: Paul's own usage helps answer that question. He later calls Israel God's people whom He foreknew. This points to covenant relationship and God's prior covenant purpose, not only advance knowledge of individual decisions (Romans 11:1-2; Amos 3:1-2).

Q: Why is Romans 11 important for understanding Romans 8?

A: Because Paul uses the same idea of foreknowledge when discussing Israel. Romans 9-11 continues Paul's discussion of God's purpose, His promises, Israel, the remnant, and the faithfulness of His covenant word (Romans 9:6-8; Romans 11:1-5).

Q: What exactly was predestined?

A: Paul tells us directly. God's people were predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son and predestined to adoption through Jesus Christ. Predestination describes God's predetermined redemptive goal in Christ (Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:5).

Q: Did God's plan begin when people chose to believe?

A: No. God's redemptive purpose in Christ existed beforehand and was revealed in history through Jesus Christ. The gospel

revealed the purpose God had planned and then accomplished in His Son (Ephesians 1:9-11; 2 Timothy 1:9-10).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

© Fulfilled Prophecies - Dan Maines.

Source Index

† Romans 8:28-30; Romans 11:1-2; Amos 3:1-2; Ephesians 1:4-5; Ephesians 1:9-11; Romans 9:6-8; 2 Timothy 1:8-10

† Historical writers: Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Books 11-20; Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, Books 5-7; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, chapters 5-7

Share on Facebook

Links

Facebook Link

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1349070089314462/posts/2097486867806110/>

Fulfilled Prophecies <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1349070089314462/>

Dan Maines

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1349070089314462/user/100001027365819/>

You may share this article freely without permission as long as you include credit to Dan Maines and/or a link to the Fulfilled Prophecies Group.