

(11) Here is how our expanded translation reads so far:

James 1:18a “Having been decreed in eternity past, God regenerated us by a spiritual birth ...

1. The next phrase gives us the link between the divine decree in eternity past and the regeneration of the believer in time.
2. This indicates that God had a plan for our lives before the universe was created. There has never been a time when God did not comprehend the future with the same perspicacity as he did the past.
3. His omniscience means he knew what decision each person would make with regard to the gospel. This in no way implies that He determined who would believe in eternity past but that He perceived who would personally make the decision to believe in time.
4. The principle regarding divine election is stated as follows: In human history, the sovereignty of God and the free will of man coexist by divine decree.
5. Because God knew who would believe and who would not does not force the conclusion that human free will does not enter into the equation.
6. The omniscience of God knows the end from the beginning including the thoughts and decisions of every person in history. Knowing who is among the elect does not mean that human free will is ignored. In human history, the volitional decisions of men inform the omniscience of God.
7. So what comes first? Election or volition? Paul informs us in Ephesians:

Ephesians 1:4 Since He elect
[ἐκλέγω (*eklégō*): to select; to choose] us in Him
before the foundation of the world [eternity past],
that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

8. The integrity of God plus the omniscience of God predetermines in history who among the human race will from their free will independently choose to believe in Jesus Christ for salvation.

9. Because the omniscience of God knows all that is knowable, God comprehended in eternity past those individuals alive during the Church Age who would believe in Christ for salvation.
10. The issue that resolves the angelic conflict is the free will decisions of Church-Age believers who give the gospel a fair hearing. Those who do but reject the message are transferred to the Torments compartment of Hades at physical death.
11. Those who positively respond to the gospel message are saved and will go to heaven when they die doing so in interim bodies.
12. There is still an ongoing controversy among Protestant theologians regarding the doctrine of election. Understanding the biblical view of this doctrine is critical to understanding James 1:18.

The Doctrine of Election

I. Selection and Election

1. Selection occurs at the point of physical birth when God imputes soul life to biological life creating human life.
2. This divine decision introduces a new person into the angelic conflict whose soul possesses self-consciousness, volition, mentality, and a conscience.
3. At some point during a person's life, he will be introduced to the gospel challenge, the presentation of which may contain, as an example, the following information:

The *gospel* is designed to present Jesus of Nazareth as Savior. Any number of details may be presented to describe His person and His work: He is both perfect God and sinless Man, who was sacrificed on the cross for the sins of the entire human race, after which He died, was buried, and three days later was resurrected from the dead. Regardless of how many details are given, the free will of the unbeliever must be left to consider whether to accept or reject Jesus as his personal Savior.¹

¹ *Forty Proclamations: The Theology of Grace Doctrine Church* (St. Charles: Joe Griffin Media Ministries, 2011), 9.

4. If the target responds positively to the gospel, then he is saved. He is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, is a member of the royal family of God, and is imputed 40 things:

Salvation occurs when the unbeliever responds with nonmeritorious faith alone in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8–9). This *faith* response has both purpose and result: The *purpose* is deliverance from punishment in the lake of fire. The *result* is the imputation of eternal life. Taken together, salvation means that believers go to heaven when they die (John 3:16).²

5. When a person believes in Christ, selection becomes election. With election comes a number of privileges including divine sustenance through logistical grace support, placed into union with Christ, and adopted into the royal family of God.
6. Election occurs in eternity past since God's omniscience comprehends all things regarding creation simultaneously. This means that in eternity past He knew how your volition would decide with regard to the presentation of the gospel.
7. This is illustrated by the computer of the divine decree which contains two chips: **(1)** ROM illustrates the sovereignty of God which has several print outs including election and **(2)** PROM representing the volitional decisions of the human race.
8. The PROM chips of both angelic creatures and mankind are programmed by omniscience since God knew free will would choose in conformity with God's sovereign will.
9. Volition is decision-making power that exists in the souls of angels and men. The PROM chip contains a precreation record of each one of our lives including every decision we would ever make in time.
10. It is important that you continue to apply the omniscience of God to your understanding of election:

God ... knows perfectly and eternally all that is knowable, whether actual or merely possible. Everything that has been known or ever will be known ... has been known to God since eternity past. Moreover, God never learns anything because He has always known everything; He knows the end from the beginning. (p. 286)

² Ibid.

The future is as perspicuous to God as is the past. He foreknows, but His foreknowledge is not predetermination. He knows we have free will ... and He knows which way we will decide in the function of our free volition in every situation in life.

God knows all the conclusions as well as all the premises; hence, even though He is totally reasonable and rational in all things, He never needs to reason things out. We can simply go along with his perfectly wise policy, which has our best interest in mind.³ (p. 287)

11. These principles are made evident in the following passages:

Psalm 33:13 The Lord looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men;

v. 14 From His dwelling place He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth,

v. 15 He who fashions the hearts of them all, He who understands all their works.

Psalm 139:1 O Lord, You have searched me and known me.

v. 2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar.

v. 3 You scrutinize my path [אֲרָחַי ('*orach*): **lifestyle**] and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways [דְּרָכַי (*derek*): **wheel-tracks**].

Psalm 147:4 He counts the number of the stars; He gives names to all of them.

v. 5 Great is our Lord and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite.

1 John 3:20b ... for God is greater than our heart and knows all things. (NASB)

12. See also: Proverbs 15:3; Malachi 3:16; Matthew 6:8; 10:29–30; Acts 15:8; Hebrews 4:3, 13.

³ R. B. Thieme, Jr., *The Integrity of God*, 4th ed. (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2005), 286–87.)

13. Principle: God invented free will to function either for or against Him; the choice lies with each individual. This applies to the decision to believe or not believe the gospel.
14. Therefore, it may be concluded that although in eternity past God *knew* those who would believe in Christ for salvation He *did not decree* them to do so.
15. One may not conclude that knowing a thing is going to occur means that God willed it to occur. What God willed is for each person's soul to be supplied with free will with which they may respond to the gospel of Christ or reject it.
16. PRINCIPLE: In human history, the sovereignty of God and the free will of man coexist by divine decree. This excerpt elaborates:

Many things that occur are results of angelic or human free will acting contrary to God's desires. He nevertheless decided or willed that these things would take place. Thus, He makes our volition truly free.⁴

17. There are some Protestant denominations that erroneously conclude that election is a solitary act of God, that certain individuals in human history are predetermined to believe in Christ and that all others are purposefully left reprobate by divine decree. This is the false doctrine of supralapsarianism. This fallacy is addressed by this citation:

No event is directly effected or caused by the decree. The decree merely establishes what will be caused, but the decree itself is not the cause. The fact that a thought or action on your part is in the decree does not mean that the decree caused you to think or do it. The cause is your own free will. Your thoughts are in the decree because, in eternity past, God had the wisdom to know *what* you would think and to not omit from His planning the fact that you *would* think it!⁵

II. The Lapsarian Controversy: The Bèza Distortion

1. It is this controversy that has resulted in the formation of several Protestant denominations in the United States.

⁴ Ibid., 298.

⁵ Ibid., 304.