

"Predetermining" and "Foreknowing" - Aspects of God's Sovereignty

This is a study of New Testament passages that focus on the concepts of "predetermining" and "foreknowing." The outline is divided into sections, based on the original Greek words found in the passages. (The English translations of these words may vary.) Most of these passages focus on specific ways in which God "predetermines" or "foreknows" the events that occur in this world. However, some passages make reference to people interacting with other people, so they would have a slightly different emphasis.

When these words are used in reference to God, the verses tend to focus on the "sovereignty" aspect of the issue that is being mentioned. There is a "human responsibility" aspect that is just as much a part of the issue (though not the focus here).

The Greek word definitions used below are based on Thayer's "Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament" (public domain).

Section 1 - The verse that inspired this study

1. **Two words that focus on God's role or control in human events and in the life of Jesus**
Acts 2:23 - He was handed over to you by the **set [predetermined]** purpose and **foreknowledge** of God. You put him to death, with the help of lawless men, by nailing him to a cross.
2. **Comments about this passage**
 - a. This passage mentions *both* concepts ("predetermining" and "foreknowing"), and was the passage that inspired this study. The two concepts are also mentioned together in Romans 8:29-30 (see below).
 - b. The word "purpose" is also present, and refers to God's "will" or "plan." However, our focus here is on the fact that God's will or plan has been "set" or "pre-determined."
 - c. Note that sovereignty and responsibility are *both* present. Both apply even to what happened to Jesus! Since Jesus is God in human form, we find Scripture passages in which sovereignty related to him the same way it relates to us. From this perspective (Jesus as human), the human responsibility aspect also existed.

Section 2 - Boundaries being set or determined

1. Definition

horizō (verb) - a) to define, to mark out the boundaries or limits (of any place or thing);
b) to define, that which has been determined, according to appointment, decree /
to ordain, determine, appoint.

2. God setting boundaries for Jesus

a. *The path that led to his betrayal and crucifixion*

Luke 22:22 - The Son of Man is going as it has been **decreed [determined]**, but
woe to that man by whom he is betrayed.

Acts 2:23 - He was handed over to you by the **set [predetermined]** purpose and
foreknowledge of God. You put him to death, with the help of lawless
men, by nailing him to a cross.

b. *How Jesus' identity was demonstrated*

Romans 1:4 - He was **declared** with power to be the Son of God, through the
Spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead - Jesus Christ our
Lord.

c. *The role Jesus will have at the Day of Justice*

Acts 10:42 - He [Jesus] commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that
he is the one **appointed** by God as judge of the living and the dead.

Acts 17:31 - God has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he
has **appointed** [Jesus]. He has given proof to everyone that he will do this
by raising him [Jesus] from the dead.

3. God setting boundaries for people

a. *Where they will live, etc.*

Acts 17:26 - From one man he made the people of all nations, so they would
inhabit the whole earth. He **determined** when and where they would live.

b. *The proper time for them to respond to the offer of salvation*

Hebrews 4:7 - Again, God **set** a certain day, called "Today," when much later he
spoke through David the passage already quoted, "Today, if you hear his
voice, do not harden your hearts." [A quote from Psalm 95:7-8, also
mentioned in previous verses.]

4. People determining the boundaries of their own actions (example)

Acts 11:29 - The disciples **decided** to provide help for the brothers living in Judea, each
as he was able.

Section 3 - Boundaries being determined in advance

1. **Definition**
proorizō (verb) - a) to predetermine, decide beforehand; b) in the NT, of God decreeing from eternity; c) to foreordain, appoint beforehand.
2. **Boundaries predetermined for Jesus**
Acts 4:28 - They did what your hand [= a reference to God's power] and purpose had **decided beforehand** should be done.
3. **Boundaries predetermined for what God's wisdom would accomplish in us**
1 Corinthians 2:7 - We speak of God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God **destined** for our glory before time began.
4. **Boundaries predetermined for those who would become God's people**
 - a. ***Being given an inheritance according to God's plan***
Ephesians 1:11 - In Christ we obtained an inheritance, having been **predestined** according to his plan. He works out everything in accordance with the purpose of his will.
 - b. ***Being adopted by God***
Ephesians 1:5-6a - He **predestined** us for adoption as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will. This is to the praise of his glorious grace, which he freely gives us in the One he loves [= Christ].
 - c. ***Being conformed to the likeness of Christ (and additional consequences)***
Romans 8:29-30 - Those God foreknew he also **predestined** to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, so that the Son might be the firstborn among many brothers. And having **predestined** them [to be conformed], he also called them; having called them, he also justified them; having justified them, he also glorified them.

Section 4 - Knowledge in advance

1. **Definition**
prognōsis (noun) - a) foreknowledge; b) forethought, pre-arrangement. [Note: Unlike our knowledge, which is passive, God's knowledge can be active and can accomplish what he knows.]
2. **God's knowledge of what would happen to Jesus**
Acts 2:23 - He was handed over to you by the set [predetermined] purpose and **foreknowledge** of God. You put him to death, with the help of lawless men, by nailing him to a cross.
3. **God's knowledge of who he would choose for obedience and salvation**
1 Peter 1:2 - To those who have been chosen according to the **foreknowledge** of God the Father, through the Spirit's work (which makes you holy), so that you can be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled by his blood: May grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Section 5 - Knowing something in advance

1. Definition

proginōskō (verb) - a) to have knowledge before hand; b) to foreknow / of those whom God elected to salvation; c) to predestinate.

2. God knowing in advance

a. *What Jesus would do*

1 Peter 1:20 - [Context: Jesus and what he did.] He was **chosen [foreknown]** for this purpose] before the creation of the world, but revealed in these final days for your sake.

b. *Those who would be his people*

Romans 11:2 - God has not rejected his people, whom he **foreknew**... [here a focus on those in Israel who would turn to Jesus].

c. *The things he would accomplish in the lives of his people*

Romans 8:29 - Those God foreknew he also **predestined** to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, so that the Son might be the firstborn among many brothers [here a focus on all God's people].

3. People knowing something in advance (or knowing it before the present moment)

a. *People who knew about Paul's past way of life*

Acts 26:5 - They have **known** me for a long time (**before** now), and if they are willing, they can testify that, according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee.

b. *People who knew in advance that false teachers would come*

2 Peter 3:17 - Dear friends, since you **already know** these things [having just been warned about them], be on your guard so that you will not be carried away by the errors of lawless people and fall from your firm position.