

# Are the “Lost” Predestined to Hell?

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**Traditional Christianity has taught that when one dies, whatever judgment awaits him is made and that is final. Some have gone so far as to teach that God chose and “predestined” some for salvation from the beginning of time, and that all others are destined for “hell.” Logically, this would mean many, even the vast majority, of humanity are “predestined” to be sent to hell for eternity (as hell is often imagined). Are the “lost” of this age predestined to eternal torment in hell?**

While some sects of traditional Christianity have taught the idea of “predestination” outlined above, others have taught that humans may choose freely whether or not to “accept Christ.” If one professes Christ in this world he is saved, is what many believe, even if the person did not reflect Christian values in how he lived his life. “Once saved, always saved,” is the way such belief is often described. It’s also termed “salvation by faith alone.” Many believe in both of these concepts, but believing in “salvation by faith alone” does not necessarily imply belief in “once saved, always saved.”

Among Protestants, salvation is often viewed as being solely contingent on one making a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. A commonly accepted belief warns that every person not making a profession of faith in Christ before dying will be cast into an ever burning hell and be eternally tortured. To avoid such a fate, readers are admonished, “Pray this prayer, and mean it with all your heart. 'Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and unless you save me I am lost forever. I thank you for dying for me at Calvary. I come to you now, Lord the best way I know how, and ask you to save me. I now receive you as my Savior. In Jesus Christ Name, Amen' “ (“The Truth About Hell,” Terry Watkins, [www.av1611.org/hell.html](http://www.av1611.org/hell.html), retrieved 1-15-18).

Some teach that besides a profession of faith, some sort of remorse for one's sins is also necessary, although salvation does not require living in obedience to God's laws, because Christ's righteousness is imputed to us upon our profession of faith. Others teach that if one is truly among the “elect,” that will be evidenced to some degree or another in how he lives his life.

All of the doctrines outlined above have in common the idea that if salvation is not attained in this life, there is no further chance after death. When one dies, he either goes to heaven or hell, and there is no remediation, no further opportunity for salvation.

## Eternal Life in Hell?

The traditional teaching of most professing Christian Churches with regard to the question at hand is summed up in statements such as the following: “Everyone lives forever in either heaven or hell” (“Eternal Life There’s More To It Than You Think,” [www.awmi.net](http://www.awmi.net), retrieved 1-27-2018). Another writer, referring to the rich man in the parable in Luke 16, states, “...as will be the case for all the wicked, he went to eternal fire to be tormented” (“Party's Over,” [www.eternallifeblog.com](http://www.eternallifeblog.com), retrieved 1-27-2018). And another, concerning hell, “There will be no hope for those who go there, no reprieve. It will seem like an unending nightmare for them. After suffering 10,000 years, the lost will still have just as long to suffer in this horrible place!”

(“Hell And Who Goes There,” [www.evangelicaloutreach.org](http://www.evangelicaloutreach.org), retrieved 1-27-2018).

The famous preacher Charles Spurgeon said in a sermon where he spoke of the resurrection of the wicked, contending their souls, which he regarded as “immortal,” would be reunited with their bodies in the resurrection. Then, he asserted, the body of anyone deemed “wicked,” “...will burn for ever without being consumed... in actual flame.” According to Spurgeon, the body of one who is “wicked” will join the soul in torment. “...body and soul shall be together, each brimfull of pain, thy soul sweating in its inmost pore drops of blood, and thy body from head to foot suffused with agony; conscience, judgment, memory, all tortured, but more—thy head tormented with racking pains, thine eyes starting from their sockets with sights of blood and woe; thine ears tormented with 'Sullen moans and hollow groans. And shrieks of tortured ghosts.' Thine heart beating high with fever; thy pulse rattling at an enormous rate in agony; thy limbs crackling like the martyrs in the fire, and yet unburnt; thyself, put in a vessel of hot oil, pained, yet coming out undestroyed; all thy veins becoming a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on; every nerve a string on which the devil shall ever play his diabolical tune of Hell's Unutterable Lament; thy soul for ever and ever aching, and thy body palpitating in unison with thy soul” (“The Resurrection of the Dead,” [www.spurgeon.org](http://www.spurgeon.org), retrieved 1-27-2018).

Catholic doctrine allows for an intermediate state after death, called “purgatory,” where those under “sanctifying grace” but not yet deemed worthy of ultimate salvation may be further purified before entering heaven. Some Protestants teach a similar doctrine.

Catholic theologians in the Middle Ages developed the concept of another place, actually a compartment of hell, called “limbo,” where unbaptized infants were sent, and where it was possible for them to experience happiness forever but without access to ultimate salvation (“Limbo,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, [www.newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org), retrieved 1-15-18). The doctrine of “limbo” for infants was more or less abandoned by the Catholic Church in 2007 (remaining as “a possible theological hypothesis”), and replaced by a statement that there is a hope that infants who have died without baptism *might* be saved by God since it was not possible to baptize them (“The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die Without Being Baptised,” ¶ 103, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va), 4-19-2007, retrieved 2-14-2018). The commission studying the question concluded that there, “...are reasons for prayerful *hope*, rather than grounds for sure knowledge” (*ibid.*, ¶ 102). However, the traditional Catholic teaching declared at various councils is: “The souls of those who depart in mortal sin, or only in original sin, go down immediately into hell, to be visited, however, with unequal punishments” (“Hell,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, [www.newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org), retrieved 1-15-18).

### The Vast Majority Lost?

Any of these views leave the vast majority of mankind of both past and present ages as being condemned to hell, with no chance of salvation beyond this life. The millions having lived and died without any appreciable knowledge of God, many having never heard of Jesus Christ, are doomed to continually enduring torturous punishment for eternity – as one being burned by fire but never being consumed or dying as a result.

In the past couple of hundred years, the majority of Christian Churches have abandoned the doctrine of “infant damnation”. Nevertheless, it was taught for hundreds of years by most

professing Christian Churches that even infants who have never sinned are punished, and for the most part left without any hope of salvation (cf. *On the History of the Dogma of Infant Damnation*, William B. Hayden, 1858).

Is this really what the Bible teaches? Would a truly just God create billions of human beings, leave the majority ignorant of the only means of salvation, and consign them to such a punishment? Would he punish with eternal damnation even the innocent?

The good news is: “NO!” Astonishing as it may seem, given pervasive false teachings, **the Bible does not teach that the ultimate fate of every human is sealed at the time of his death in this present age.**

The truth about this matter is reflected in many Scriptures, and is pictured by a little known feast, an annual Sabbath, that God commanded to be kept. The festival is associated with the Feast of Tabernacles, although technically it is a separate feast, sometimes referred to as the Last Great Day (Leviticus 23:36; John 7:37). God is both far more just and far more merciful than he is commonly portrayed by those who claim to represent him. God's purpose for mankind is far more inclusive than many have imagined, and it will be accomplished.

Paul wrote, “But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). But does God love only a relatively few sinners? Did he die for only a relatively small segment of mankind? Or did he die for all sinners?

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever** believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and **not for ours only but also for the whole world**” (1 John 2:1-2; “propitiation,” ἱλασμός [*hilasmós*], atonement, or means of reconciliation). So it's clear that the purpose of Jesus' death was to make possible reconciliation to God **for the whole world, not just a small segment of it.**

The Bible clearly teaches that it is only through Jesus Christ that salvation is possible. Speaking of Jesus Christ, Scripture says, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Paul wrote, “...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9-10). But then, “...whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?” (Romans 10:13-14).

But what if large portions, if not the majority, of the world's population in some historical periods have or have had little or no real possibility of gaining access to the redemption made possible through the blood of Christ, vast numbers never having so much as heard the name of Jesus Christ nor having had any knowledge of the true God? Who were in fact, from a spiritual standpoint, “dead in their sins,” “without Christ,” and “having no hope and without

God in the world" (Ephesians 2:1, 12).

What if even the majority of those who have or have had access to salvation, reject it? What if the majority of those called to repentance refuse to believe in the message of the gospel or repent (as did the majority of ancient Israel, taken as a whole, or modern Israel, for that matter)? Jesus said, speaking of the present age, "... **many are called, but few are chosen**" (Matthew 22:14). Is Christ's sacrifice in vain, at least as far as those not chosen in this age are concerned?

The Bible tells us that all human beings having the capacity to sin (Jesus Christ excepted) have sinned (Romans 3:23; Hebrews 4:15; 1 John 1:8, 10). It tells us that God's righteous judgment on sin is death. "...the wages of sin is death..." (Romans 6:23). "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and **death through sin**, and thus death spread to all men, **because all sinned**" (Romans 5:12).

Yet, the Bible tells us that just as **death has reigned through sin**, in a future time **death will be overcome** by God's grace to the end of eternal life: "Consequently, just as condemnation for all people came through one transgression, so too through the one righteous act came righteousness **leading to life for all people**. For just as through the disobedience of the one man many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of one man **many will be made righteous**. Now the law came in so that the transgression may increase, but where sin increased, grace multiplied all the more, so that **just as sin reigned in death, so also grace will reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord**" (Romans 5:18-21, NET).

For now, death still reigns. Most, as throughout human history, are still dead in their sins. But we're told that where sin now abounds, in the future **grace will much more abound** (Romans 5:20). The sacrifice of Christ will lead to life for all (hyperbole, nearly all). But we don't see that happening, yet.

God will work out his plan to accomplish the salvation of all mankind, except for those who will adamantly and persistently refuse to submit to God and his will beyond all hope. To understand how, let's examine how God has dealt and will in the future deal with Israel.

#### Who are Predestined?

In Romans 8 Paul discusses the future and ultimate salvation of Israel: "For **whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified" (Romans 8:29-30).

There are some problems with the way this passage of Scripture is translated. It says God "called," past tense, those "predestined" to be conformed to the image of Christ. Logically, that would leave out anyone not called before Paul wrote this statement. Likewise with those spoken of as having been "justified," and "glorified." Jesus himself was not "glorified," in the fullest sense, until he was resurrected (John 7:39; 12:16; 1 Peter 1:21). Nor will the faithful be

“glorified” until they are resurrected (1 Corinthians 15:43; Philippians 3:21; cf. Daniel 12:2-3). So why are these words in the past tense in this translation?

The *aorist* tense in Greek comes from a word that means literally “without horizon,” often understood in Grammar as “indefinite.” Generally speaking, it refers to an action, which may be past, present or future (or any combination of the three), depending on the context, and may be repeated. [1] The aorist tense of the verbs in the verses quoted above is better rendered in the Concordant Version: “Whom He **foreknew** [foreknows?], He **designates** beforehand, also, to be conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be Firstborn among many brethren. Now whom He **designates** beforehand, these He **calls** also, and whom He **calls**, these He **justifies** also; now whom He **justifies**, these He **glorifies** also.”

Notice it says whom God foreknew, or foreknows (Greek: προγινώσκω, *proginosko*, know before). What does this mean, exactly? Compare Paul's statement: "My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. They **knew** [*proginosko*] me from the first" (Acts 26:4-5).

Paul, who may have been a member of the Sanhedrin before his conversion, and in any case was prominent among the leaders of the Jews at the time of Jesus' death, was known to the Jews from an early age, from **near the earliest point at which it was possible to know him**.

**Whom has God not known from the beginning, that is, from the earliest time at which it was possible to know him? No one.** From the beginning of their existence, and in some respects before the nations existed, God has known both Israelite and Gentile nations. God separated the nations at the time of Babel, as described in Genesis chapters 10 and 11. This was long before there were any Israelites. Yet, the Bible speaks of the time, “When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, **When He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples According to the number of the children of Israel**” (Deuteronomy 32:8). So God certainly knew the Gentile peoples from the beginning of their existence. And even before Jacob (Israel) and his descendants were born, God had them in mind as the nations were scattered to their respective allotted lands.

Paul, speaking to a Greek audience in Athens, said of God, “...He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:26-27). Clearly, since he made them, God has known from the beginning “every nation of men,” and each has the potential for seeking God, and eventually finding God (cf. Isaiah 41:4; 44:6-7).

This does not necessarily imply that God knows every single individual before he or she comes into existence, but he has certainly known all the *peoples* of the earth (ethnic or national groups) from their inception, if not before, and he does know every single individual from the earliest possible point in time, whenever that might be in each individual case. In some cases this might be before the person is even conceived (Jeremiah 1:5).

### The Meaning of “Predestination”

Those who have assumed that “predestination” means that one's ultimate destiny is sealed or was sealed from before creation, regardless of the choices one makes, or somehow predetermining the choices he makes, have made a grave error. Compounding the error is the idea that only a relative few are “predestined” to salvation, while the rest are consigned to eternal suffering in “hell,” as a result of being condemned to that fate before they were ever born.

Rather, “predestination” has to do with the **purpose for which God created mankind**. But each person has a say in the ultimate outcome concerning his own life, through the choices he makes.

Israel in the wilderness, as we will discuss in more detail later, is an **example**, or model, of this principle. God had “predestined” the people of Israel to inherit the “promised land,” a physical kingdom, in Canaan (Genesis 15:13, 16; Exodus 3:7-8). So God delivered them from slavery in Egypt, and set about leading them to the promised inheritance. But most of those who came out of Egypt **never realized the destiny God had in mind for them at that time**, the physical inheritance in Canaan. Why? Because of their **lack of faith**, because of the **choices they made** (Hebrews 3:16-19).

Human beings were created with a particular purpose, or “destiny,” in mind. What is that God given purpose or potential “destiny”? **All** human beings who have ever been or ever will be have been **purposed by God beforehand** (or “predestined”) to be conformed to the image of his Son (Romans 8:29). That is, they are **created for that purpose and with that potential**. This is the meaning of “**predestination**” in terms of ultimate salvation. “[God] desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). “Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other” (Isaiah 45:22). “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Those who genuinely repent of their sins in godly faith, and endure in faith, will be saved (Acts 2:38-40; Matthew 24:13; Hebrews 10:35-39). Being “saved” means, in this context, being given an inheritance with eternal life in the kingdom of God, as physical Israel was to be given an inheritance in Canaan, and being spared the “second death” (Matthew 25:34, 46; Revelation 2:11; 21:7-8).

By no means have all who have lived been called, as yet. But, In **due time**, **all** will have been **called**, with more than ample opportunity to repent. **Justification** for all is already at hand, and the means of their **glorification** has been established. “...having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that **in the dispensation of the fullness of the times** He might **gather together in one all things in Christ**, both which are in heaven and which are on earth – in Him. In Him also we have obtained [better translated, “obtain,” not “have obtained”] an inheritance [or it could be translated, “we become heirs”], being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1:9-11).

God promised the physical descendants of Israel a physical inheritance in the land of Canaan (later called Palestine). This physical inheritance is a type of the ultimate destiny of mankind, the kingdom of God. That is, the kingdom of God is the ultimate destiny of all who eventually meet God's requirements of faith and obedience,

Adam Clarke in his *Commentary* on Ephesians 1:11 states concerning “being predestined”: “God having determined to bring both Jews and Gentiles to salvation, not by works, nor by any human means or schemes, but by Jesus Christ; that salvation being defined and determined before in the Divine mind, and the means by which it should be brought about all being according to his purpose....

.....

“And as the apostle speaks of obtaining the inheritance, he most evidently refers to that of which **the promised land was the type and pledge**. And as that land was assigned to the Israelites by limit and lot, both of which were appointed by God so the salvation now sent to the Gentiles was as expressly their lot or portion, as the promised land was that of the people of Israel. All this shows that **the Israelites were a typical people**; their land, the manner of possessing it, their civil and religious code, &c., **all typical**; and that in, by, and through them, God had **fore-determined, fore-described, and fore-ascertained a greater and more glorious people, among whom the deepest counsels of his wisdom should be manifested, and the most powerful works of his eternal mercy, grace, holiness, goodness, and truth, be fully exhibited**. Thus there was nothing fortuitous in the Christian scheme; all was the result of infinite counsel and design.”

The Greek word translated “predestined” is from προορίζω (*proorizo*) or cognate words. *Proorizo* is a compound word, with *pro*, which means before, and *horizo*. The latter is a geographical term which means properly to mark out a boundary [as in an inheritance] (cf. Clarke on Ephesians 1:5; *Strong's lexicon* on *horizo* [3724], and *horion* [3725]). The English word “horizon” is from *horizo* (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*; *Dictionary.com*). When God called Israel out of Egypt he was doing something he had **long purposed to do**. He had **already determined an inheritance** for them (Genesis 12:7). **In the same manner, following the pattern found in the physical inheritance God had preordained for Israel, God purposes the salvation of all mankind.**

With this in mind, let's examine again Acts 17: “And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that **they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him**, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’ Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but **now commands all men everywhere to repent**” (Acts 17:26-30).

Why Is Mankind Blinded?

**Israel is an example, a type** of how God is working out his **plan for the salvation of all mankind**, that is, all peoples. "I say then, **has God cast away His people?** Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has **not** cast away His people **whom He foreknew**" (Romans 11:1-2). Continuing in the same chapter: "What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the **rest were blinded**. Just as it is written: 'God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day'" (Romans 11:7-8).

And why were the rest, that is most of the Israelites, not yet among the "elect" in terms of eternal salvation, blinded? It is **not** because they were not called! The answer to why they were blinded is in, among other places, the book of Isaiah:

"Pause and wonder! **Blind yourselves and be blind!** They are drunk, but not with wine; They stagger, but not with intoxicating drink. For the Lord has poured out on you The spirit of deep sleep, And has closed your eyes, namely, the prophets; And He has covered your heads, namely, the seers. **The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed**, which men deliver to one who is literate, saying, 'Read this, please.' And he says, 'I cannot, for it is sealed.' Then the book is delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, 'Read this, please.' And he says, 'I am not literate.' Therefore the Lord said: 'Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But **have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men**, Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work Among this people, A marvelous work and a wonder; For the **wisdom of their wise men shall perish, And the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden**" (Isaiah 29:9-14).

Their refusal to conform to God's word blinded the Israelites, **even though the entire nation was called**. "Listen to Me, O Jacob, And Israel, **My called**: I am He, I am the First, I am also the Last.

.....  
 "I, even I, have spoken; Yes, **I have called him**,.....

.....  
 "Thus says the Lord, **your Redeemer**, The Holy One of Israel: 'I am the Lord your God, Who **teaches** you to profit, Who **leads** you by the way you should go. **Oh, that you had heeded My commandments!** Then your peace would have been like a river, And your righteousness like the waves of the sea. Your descendants also would have been like the sand, And the offspring of your body like the grains of sand; **His name would not have been cut off** Nor destroyed from before Me'" (Isaiah 48:12, 15, 17-19).

"Thus says the Lord.... '**So will I choose their delusions**, And bring their fears on them; **Because, when I called, no one answered, When I spoke they did not hear; But they did evil before My eyes, And chose that in which I do not delight**" (Isaiah 66:1, 4).

"But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel. And now, because you have **done all these works**,' says the Lord, 'and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you **did not hear**, and **I called you**, but you did not answer, therefore I will do to the house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to this place which I gave to you and your fathers,

as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brethren--the whole posterity of Ephraim" (Jeremiah 7:12-15).

"Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have even **sent to you all My servants the prophets**, daily rising up early and sending them. Yet **they did not obey Me or incline their ear**, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers. Therefore you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not obey you. **You shall also call to them**, but they will not answer you. So you shall say to them, `This is a nation that **does not obey the voice of the Lord** their God nor receive correction. **Truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth**" (Jeremiah 7:25-28).

"Therefore thus says the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel: `Behold, I will bring on Judah and on all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the doom that I have pronounced against them; because I have spoken to them but they have not heard, and **I have called** to them but they have not answered" (Jeremiah 35:17).

"When Israel was a child, I loved him, And out of Egypt **I called** My son. As they [God's prophets] **called them**, So they went from them; They sacrificed to the Baals, And burned incense to carved images. I taught Ephraim to walk, Taking them by their arms; But they did not know that I healed them. **I drew them** with gentle cords, With bands of love, And I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them. He shall not return to the land of Egypt; But the Assyrian shall be his king, **Because they refused to repent**" (Hosea 11:1-5).

Israel heard the gospel. "For who, **having heard**, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses?" (Hebrews 3:16).

"For indeed the **gospel was preached to us as well as to them [ancient Israel]**; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it (Hebrews 4:2).

Faith is a firm belief. They did not believe the word that they had heard. "And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!' But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: 'Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world.' But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: 'I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.' But Isaiah is very bold and says: 'I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.' But to Israel he says: 'All day long **I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people.**'" (Romans 10:15-21).

The people of Israel were given a choice, but they made the wrong choice. "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore **choose life**, that both you and your descendants may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19)

"But you are those who forsake the Lord, Who forget My holy mountain, Who prepare a table for Gad, And who furnish a drink offering for Meni [referring to false gods worshiped among the Israelites, and sacrifices made to them]. Therefore I will number you for the sword, And you shall all bow down to the slaughter; Because, **when I called, you did not answer**; When I spoke, you did not hear, But did evil before My eyes, And **chose that in which I do not delight**" (Isaiah 65:11-12).

As reflected in these verses, most of the Israelites chose to live in sin, and they died in their sins.

### **Does that mean they are lost forever?**

#### Are Those Who Remained in Sin Lost Forever?

Notice carefully what Paul wrote in the book of Romans: "I ask then, they did not stumble **into an irrevocable fall, did they? Absolutely not!** But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make Israel jealous. Now if their transgression means riches for the world and their defeat means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will **their full restoration** bring?"

"Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Seeing that I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if somehow I could provoke my people to jealousy and save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, **what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?**

"If the first portion of the dough offered is holy, then the whole batch is holy, and if the root is holy, so too are the branches. Now if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among them and participated in the richness of the olive root, do not boast over the branches.

"But if you boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. Then you will say, 'The branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.' Granted! They were **broken off because of their unbelief**, but you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but fear! For if God did not spare the natural branches, perhaps he will not spare you.

"Notice therefore the kindness and harshness of God - harshness toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness toward you, **provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off**. And even they - **if they do not continue in their unbelief** - will be grafted in, for **God is able to graft them in again**.

"For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches **be grafted back into their own olive tree?** For I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: A partial hardening has happened to Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in" (Romans 11:11-25, NET).

In verse 25, the last verse quoted above, is the statement (as translated in the NKJV): “...that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” “Fullness” is translated from the Greek word πλήρωμα (*pleroma*). One of the meanings of this word is “completeness or fullness of time” (*Thayer's New Testament Greek Lexicon*). When the “times of the Gentiles” are fulfilled, Christ will intervene and bring salvation to Israel (Luke 21:24). When Christ intervenes he will put an end to the dominance of the Gentile kingdoms (Daniel 2:44).

Then Paul continues in Romans 11:

“And so **all Israel will be saved**, as it is written:

'The Deliverer will come out of Zion; he will remove ungodliness from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them, **when I take away their sins.**'

“In regard to the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but in regard to election they are dearly loved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. Just as you were formerly disobedient to God, but have now received mercy due to their disobedience, so they too have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, **they too may now receive mercy**. For God has consigned all people to disobedience so that he may **show mercy to them all**” (Romans 11:26-32, NET).

As is pointed out in *Thayer's Lexicon* and other sources the Greek word for “all” is sometimes employed as a figure of speech called hyperbole, where “all” is used for the majority, or nearly all, or a large number (compare Mark 1:5; John 3:22-23; 4:1-3). The Bible indicates that the vast majority of Israel, and of mankind, will ultimately be saved. But, as human beings are free moral agents, some will refuse to repent, though given every opportunity, and having hardened themselves beyond redemption, will be punished with destruction in a “second death” (Revelation 21:8).

God has a plan of salvation that extends far beyond what most people have imagined. In Ezekiel 37 is described a resurrection, a physical resurrection, in a metaphorical valley of “very dry” bones. They are the bones of people who had long been dead. The bones represent “the whole house of Israel,” who by way of metaphor say, “Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off” (Ezekiel 37:11).

But God replies, “Behold, O My people, **I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves**, and bring you into the land of Israel. **Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves**, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. **I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land**. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it” (Ezekiel 37:12-14).

What does this say? That God will toss them into a cauldron of fire to be tortured for eternity? No! He will give his Spirit to these people resurrected again to mortal human beings, and place them in their own land! And, having been dead, and then resurrected, they will know beyond any doubt the power of God.

This is part of the resurrection that shall occur after the millennial reign of Jesus Christ, at the time of the "great white throne judgment." At that time most of the dead, not only of Israel, but of all nations, will be resurrected who were not resurrected in the "first resurrection" at the time of Jesus Christ's return (1 Corinthians 15:22-23; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 20:11-15).

They will be given a chance to be taught at that time about the true God, to repent, and to be given the Spirit of God. As Jesus said, "...they shall all be taught by God" (John 6:45).

God's purpose for mankind is not failing. The good news is God is the God of salvation. This is not the only day of salvation. God not only holds open the invitation to repentance and salvation now, but will yet in a future age as well, offer salvation to all Israel and all mankind, even those who at one time rejected him. God's mercy and justice will be revealed for all to see, and all will know, God is the Eternal, the savior, the redeemer of mankind.

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We have companion articles relating to some of the questions touched on in this article. Please see "What Is Death?"; "The Truth About Hell"; "Lazarus and the Rich Man"; "Are Many or Few Called in this Age?" All are available at [www.cogmessenger.org](http://www.cogmessenger.org).

Notes:

[1] It has become common for the Greek aorist (indicative) to be regarded as denoting action that occurred in the past. It is commonly translated into English with verbs in the past tense, although in the King James Version the aorist is often translated into the present perfect tense. But the aorist cannot be consistently translated into the English past tense (or present perfect, which indicates past action) without nonsensical and misleading results. The following is an example:

Galatians 5:24 as translated in the KJV tells us that "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh." "This has led to the logical deduction that this is a definite past experience, as was the case with Christ. It supports the doctrine of sinlessness in this life. The correct reading may grate on the English ear, but it conveys the truth. They crucify the flesh. It is a fact for the past, the present and the future. A knowledge of this distinction would have saved the saints from many a tremendous blunder and false step" (*The English and Greek Indefinite*, Concordant Publishing Concern, pp. 26, 28). That this is the case is confirmed by common experience, as well as Scriptures such as Romans 8:13; 1 Corinthians 3:3; 9:27; Galatians 5:17 and Colossians 3:5.

Another example is 2 Timothy 1:10, where the NKJV, referring to Jesus Christ, says, "...who has abolished death..." "Has abolished" is translated from the aorist active participle of the Greek word καταργέω (*katargéō*). Common observation, however, tells us death has not been abolished. Christ has been resurrected to eternal life. But death still reigns in this world. Yet others will be resurrected to eternal life in the future, and for them, at that time, death will be "abolished." Finally we read that at the consummation of God's plan of salvation, "there shall

be no more death” (Revelation 21:4).

“The abolition of death is partly past but mostly future. How can we express this in English? By the very form by which we have chosen to render the Greek indefinite. All incongruity vanishes when we translate ‘Who, indeed, abolishes death ...’” (*The English and Greek Indefinite*, Concordant Publishing Concern, p. 18).

Aorist is defined in the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary as, “an inflectional form of a verb typically denoting simple occurrence of an action without reference to its completeness, duration, or repetition” (www.merriam-webster.com, retrieved 1-20-2018). *The Greek Elements* refers to the aorist by the term “Indefinite,” stating, “This is usually called the ‘aorist’, meaning indefinite. The indefiniteness is accomplished by using both the signs of the past and future in the same word. Hence it might be well called a Past-Future. *It is indefinite as to time as well as to state*” (Concordant Publishing Concern, 1971, p.29, emphasis added).

In commenting on the Greek aorist indicative, the grammarian A. T. Robertson stated that it, “...is not the exact equivalent of any tense in any other language.” He further commented, “Certainly one cannot say that the English translations have been successful with the Greek aorist.” Further, “The Greek aorist and the English past do not exactly correspond....” And finally, “...the Greek aorist is translatable into almost every English tense except the imperfect...” (*A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 1914, pp. 847-848). In commenting on the aorist participle, Robertson reveals, “The aorist is, strictly speaking, timeless” (*ibid.*, p. 859).

Thus one ought not assume that an aorist Greek verb is referring to past action, or to only past action, without careful examination of the context and the nature of the subject being discussed.

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