



Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.

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“Issues of Destiny”

Doing back research for what I am teaching currently, “The Day of the LORD Proclaimed,” I somehow began looking into issues of destiny. This came about because I had begun presenting the three views on what happens to unbelievers, namely: annihilation, universal salvation, and eternal punishment, in the syllabus of the class.

When I “googled” the words “destiny determine,” different answers to the question of who or what determines one’s destiny came up:

1. Where you live (geography)
2. Discipline, whether or not you have it
3. Desire
4. Decisions and choices
5. What happens on the prayer altar
6. Talents and personal giftings
7. Identity/how God sees you and how you see yourself (in Christ or otherwise)
8. Outworking of lordship, i.e., whoever truly is lord of one’s life, Christ or otherwise
9. Thoughts, words, declarations
10. Character

Now, **whoever or whatever we designate as controlling our destiny is our “lord.”** That is built into the concept of Lordship scripturally. If we control our own destiny, whether consciously by various factors and/or by default, then we are our own lord. If we say a tree is our higher power and we submit to that higher power, then we have made the tree our “lord.” We have given that higher power the control of our destiny. If we truly have Jesus as our LORD, then Jesus Christ controls our destiny.

Then I got to thinking: **who and/or what controlled Jesus’ destiny?** His death, for example, was predetermined. Jesus was delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. (Acts 2:23) God’s sovereignty in this in Acts 4:27, 28:

Truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your plan had predestined to take place.

Interesting, yes? Jesus lived out the prophetic word. We read often, “that the scriptures might be fulfilled...” He was sent to do the will of the Father, and He did so willingly. Often, He must go to some place, do something, and said, “Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.” Was there a plan? Apparently, for Jesus says then, “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” (Luke 24:46, 47) Jesus’ destiny is determined by the Father’s will, with which Jesus is in full accord. Things took place in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. (John 19:36) God purposed to bring about His plan, even, by the way, when events involved things His Law forbids, like people hating Jesus; the betrayal of Jesus; piercing Jesus’ side.

What about people, those (all) who have sinned and fall short of the glory of God? In the judicial hardening of men’s hearts, we see God determining destiny. Moses was sent to Pharaoh, for example, and God issued the command to let His people go in order that they might serve Him. That was God’s will. But God also told Moses that He would harden Pharaoh’s heart so that Pharaoh would not let the people go. (Exodus 4:21; 8:21; 9:12; 10:20, 27; 11:10; 14:4) So even though God issued a command, He also decreed the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart. It was all in God’s plan, and the people did exit just as God prophesied to Abraham. (Genesis 15:13, 14) [See God’s sovereignty in action also in Joshua 11:18-20, Romans 11:7, 8; Isaiah 42:18; Mark 4:11, 12.]

Many are the plans in a man’s heart; but it is the LORD’s purposes that prevail. Prov. 19:21

God can restrain evil; He has the power and the right to do so. He can also choose whether or not to restrain evil. (Proverbs 21:1) In the case of Abimelech, evil was restrained (Genesis 20:6; Psalm 33:10, 11). In the case of Eli’s sons, it was not. (1 Samuel 2:2-25) It was the will of God to put them to death. Now God does not desire the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18: 23), but in this case God chose and it was His will/desire to put Eli’s sons to death. [See also Deuteronomy 28:63.] His righteousness is upheld in however He wills; He is sovereign. He wills and commands and maintains His standard of holiness while at the same time acting sovereignly in the affairs of men and nations.

Another thing came to mind: **what factors control the destiny of believers in Jesus Christ?**

1 Peter 2:7-10 is just one passage demonstrating that identity in Christ leads to believers fulfilling their destiny in Him. For example, this passage tells us that Jesus Christ is a stumbling stone and rock of offense to those which stumble at the word, being disobedient; “whereunto also they were appointed.” (v. 8) But this passage tells believers that we are chosen; that we have obtained mercy and that others have not obtained mercy of God; that the people of God are His own possession. God owns everything; some are His inheritance (2 Corinthians 6:16). People are either set apart in Christ or separated from Christ, holy or unholy, godly or ungodly. Believers constitute a royal priesthood, so before what god do we serve? Can we say, “Jesus Christ, whose I am and whom I serve?” Have we been called out of darkness and now living in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Are we showing forth the excellent glory of the true God in our words, works, walk, and way of life?

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into marvelous light:

which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. 1 Peter 2:9, 10

Ephesians tells us believers were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world for a purpose: to be holy and without blame before Him in Love. (1:4)

God the Father predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace. (Eph.2:5, 6)

Believers have forgiveness of sins, having been redeemed through the atoning work of Christ for redemption; that God's good pleasure and purpose in Himself resulted in a plan. One's destiny is part of that plan which God has purposed. (Ephesians 1.7-9)

Ephesians continues in the setting forth of God's plan and how we are to develop a new way of thinking, to walk in love, to walk in wisdom, to walk in unity, etc. To the extent a believer obeys the will of God affects his destiny. We're on the train, and the train's destination is set, but we have choices on the train.

Paul understood. He made his plans but says, I will return to you if God wills. (Acts 18:21; cf. 1 Corinthians 4:19, 16:7) The writer to the Hebrews gets it (Hebrews 6:3). James reminds believers of God's sovereignty over our plans by telling us what we ought to say: If the Lord wills... (James 4:13-15) We know this. The plans we have in mind, all those destinies we determine by our choices, decisions, declarations, giftings, geography, are subject to God's sovereign right to overrule. (Proverbs 16:1, 9, 33; 19:21; Jeremiah 10:23). We can thank God for this. He is in control. He knows the plans He has for us, what He has purposed for our lives. (Jeremiah 29:11) He is working in us, both to will and to work for His good pleasure (Phil 2:12, 13). We are to work out what He works within. We are to trust Him as He directs our steps. We are to lay our own plans and prayers and lives before Him and subject them to His sovereign control. (Philippians 4)

God's perfect will prevails over His permissive will. His "will of decree" prevails over His "will of command." His secret will prevails over His revealed will. His ways are righteous. His decrees prevail over His wishes/desires. He does not sin in allowing sin to happen; all He has to do is nothing, not restrain sin. People follow the bent of their hearts. When God does not restrain, people do what comes naturally. Without the supernatural help of the Holy Spirit, people follow the dictates of the natural mind and do according to their hearts. Nothing happens without God's righteous decree. God is not the author of sin nor does He share in any sin. He does, however, establish second and intermediate causes by which things happen at definite moments and in certain ways which He purposes. So one might mean it for evil, but God meant it for good (Genesis 50:20) or look! God permitted Satan to torment Job (Job 1:12; 2:6) yet Job says, "The LORD has taken." (Job 1:21, 22) "Shall we receive good from God and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10)

And then: **what is God's role in the determination of one's destiny?** Do things happen to us by chance, by design, by the outworking of who we are (our identity), or what? And if we're riding a train, we might have choices on the train, but what about the train itself? It has its own schedule.

Both Arminians and Reformed agree that God wills for all to be saved. (1 Timothy 2:4). Both agree that all are not saved "because God is committed to something even more valuable than saving all." (Piper, *John Does God Desire All to Be Saved?* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013, p. 39). And what is that higher commitment on God's part? Arminians believe it is human self-determination, a

presupposed gift of God, and a possible resulting love relationship with God. Reformed folks believe it is the manifestation of the full range of God's glory in wrath and mercy (Romans 9:22, 23) and the humbling of man so that he enjoys giving all credit to God for his salvation (1 Cor. 1:29). (Ibid, p.39)

God determines destiny, in my opinion. God is not at our mercy; we are at His mercy. God's affections and thoughts are pure, holy; His decisions are righteous. He is just and true. God is glorious in all His perfections and all is to the praise of His glory. God is committed to the display of the full range of His nature, His manifold glory.

The offer of salvation in Jesus Christ alone is freely given to everyone. Jesus' command to "repent or perish," is given to everyone. Not all receive Christ, but to all who receive Him, to them gives He power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on His name. (John 1:12) Those who believe were born of the will of God. (John 1:13) Those who have the Son have life: those who have not the Son of God have not life. (1 John 5:12) This invitation requires a response even as it comes with a warning. Jesus Christ brings believers out of darkness and places them in His marvelous light. His light shines into the darkness. Those who do not believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God are condemned already; they are already in the estate of condemnation. (John 3:17-21) These hate the light, but those to whom faith and repentance have been granted, come to the light and will glorify God for His grace and mercy.

As to issues of destiny, I was on a collision course headed for destruction. My way wasn't working. I had an encounter with the Holy Spirit over 40 years ago. God changed my life and its direction. My destiny is in His hands, something for which I am thankful. He has called me to be witness unto Jesus Christ, whose I am and whom I serve. He has sent me to every continent, and to 80 nations as His messenger. Soon I leave again to Africa with an MCM mission team. My life is not at all what I imagined or planned for myself; I am not my own. I invite you along with the invitation of Christ to repent and believe the gospel. Consider what or who is in control of your destiny, be you unbeliever or believer.

We appreciate your donations and gifts to MCM. They enable us to take the gospel of Jesus Christ around the world and across backyard fences, to help forgotten peoples, to teach and train and make disciples, and to minister both spiritually and tangibly. Thank you for your God-given gifts, prayers, and financial support as MCM reaches out globally, locally, online, and as the Holy Spirit leads.

Just the messenger,

Mary Craig

Mary Craig, D. Min.

Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Jesus to Peter and Andrew, Matthew 4:19