

## **God's election and our choice**

### **"Many are called, but few are chosen."**

Jesus told parables to show how the reign of God works. One of these parables (Mt. 22, 2 - 14) shows a king who organizes a wedding for his son and invites guests to the wedding celebration. Many of the invited guests decline the invitation. As a result, the king invites many guests who were not supposed to attend the celebration, especially those who were normally regarded as scum. The invited guests who did not want to come are then not allowed to attend the celebration. Jesus concludes with the sentence: "Many are called, but few are chosen." (Mt 22:14) In this parable, the inviter assumes that all those invited are welcome. It is then the decision of those invited who do not want to come that leads to them no longer being allowed to come to the wedding, i.e. no longer being chosen.

### **God invites human beings to take hold of the salvation that He has prepared for them**

God had delivered the people of Israel from Egypt, made a covenant with them at Sinai and then led them to the border of the Promised Land. At that moment they could have set out and completely conquered the Promised Land. But the people rebelled and then had to wander through the desert for 40 years until the whole generation of rebels had died. After that, Israel could have conquered the entire Promised Land, but they did not conquer it all, and the surviving pagans then led the Israelites to apostasy from God and to disasters again and again. David became king, and his kingship should have lasted forever, but the sin of his successors led first to the diminishment and later to the destruction of his kingdom.

Jesus himself invited: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Mt. 11, 28 - 30) And in the last book of the Bible, Revelation, there is the invitation: "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!'; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that thirsteth come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev 22:17) The apostle describes his ministry with the words: "So then we are ambassadors in Christ's stead, as God calls through us: Be reconciled to God." (2 Cor. 5:20) Paul's entire ministry is a proclamation of the grace that God has acquired for us in Christ and for which we now no longer have to pay anything, and an invitation to accept this grace gratefully and to trust in it so that it can also be effective for us.

### **God is sovereign and rules and He sees everything in the past. Present and future**

Modern science has established that time and space and matter and energy are very closely connected. Time, space and matter were created together by an extremely in-

telligent being that exists outside of space and time, but sees everything that happens in space and time and can influence and change all of this anywhere and at any time in space and time. We experience how time passes one after the other, how things have happened in the past and how past decisions are determined. The present is the time in which decisions are made. In the future, many possibilities are still open, while God sees everything in the past, present and future simultaneously.

With Albert Einstein's special theory of relativity, we have learned new things about how the spatial and temporal distance of events changes when viewed from an observer moving with velocity  $v$ . The most important result is that events seen from the observer at rest are no longer simultaneous for the observer in motion. For a particle of light (photon) that is emitted from an atom on the sun and which then travels the 150 million km to earth in about 8 minutes at a speed of just under 300,000 km per second, and which is then received in the retina of one of our eyes, the emission and recording of the light particle take place at the same place and at the same time. Since this already happens with something as simple as a particle of light, I see no problem in assuming that God sees the entire cosmos with all the atoms in it in its entire history from beginning to end in the past, present and future with a single glance.

### **Can we really decide, or is everything predetermined?**

God is Lord of lords and King of kings. But He gives man the choice. He deliberately limits His sovereignty because He wants a voluntary yes from us. God is love, and He gives us the opportunity to love Him voluntarily and without coercion. In doing so, He gives us a dignity that many of His creatures do not have. It is the freedom to recognize and decide that makes us images of God. Our decisions are so important that they influence the course of history. In the book of Jonah we are told how God had planned to destroy the city of Nineveh, but how this wicked city turned back to God and was allowed to live on. However, there is the possibility that a person who rejects God's words and does not want to hear them will not be able to hear them later.

We are oppressed by many things that want to prevent us from making a free decision. In particular, Satan wants to manipulate us so that we make the wrong decision or are even so caught up with many things that occupy us. Many fears want to take us so captive that we can no longer think clearly. In order for us to be able to make a decision at all, God must first give us the opportunity to do so. We don't deserve that, but God is happy to give it to us. This is the grace of God that precedes our decision.

### **Does God create a large number of people who are destined for damnation from the outset, and a small number who will be saved?**

What Paul writes in Romans chapter 9, verse 15 - 20 seems to indicate this. If this were the case, however, all of God's invitations to sinners would be pointless, just as if I were to invite my soup plates, tables and chairs and call them to give their lives to Jesus. Any call to faith would then also be pointless. But the fact that God wants all

people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth speaks against this. (1 Tim. 2:4) In the parable of the invitation to the wedding feast, it becomes very clear that those invited had a chance at the beginning and were only excluded after they had rejected the invitation. After that they were the inferior vessels. If you read the book of Acts in context, it becomes very clear that at the beginning there is the offer to Israel that if Israel repented, Jesus would return very soon and bring the times of refreshment promised in the Bible (Acts 3, 198 - 21). Israel could have repented, but it increasingly refused and the doors for the gospel were increasingly closed there. Paul then comes to the conclusion that Israel is partly hardened until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and that then all Israel will come to faith in Jesus. (Rom. 11, 25 - 26).

Jesus Himself prophesied that Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed, that great catastrophes would then come and that Jesus would come for all to see. (Mk. 13, 26) Apparently Jesus still expected that His return would take place during the lifetime of His disciples.

### **Why is the return of Jesus, visible to all, so important?**

"When the Christ, our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." (Col. 3, 4) "For the eager expectation of the creation longs for the revealing of the sons of God in glory, because then it will be set free. For this creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, yet in hope, because the creation itself also will be set free from the bondage of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and travails with us until now." (Rom. 8, 19 - 22) Anyone who has a little idea of the suffering in the animal world, how animals have to live in fear and are devoured, and anyone who can empathize a little with the workings of wickedness and destruction in human history, is horrified by the gigantic amount of suffering that has accumulated over the centuries. If Jesus had returned in glory for all to see in the 1st century after His birth, what would the whole of creation and especially the whole of humanity have been spared? The genocides of the Jews and the Armenians, the mass slaughter of the two world wars, the terror of the French Revolution, Marxism, National Socialism and in the name of Islam, the many diseases and epidemics ... ! Obviously, history did not turn out the way God had planned it.

### **Why has Jesus not yet returned in glory?**

In short: we were not ready.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:51 ff: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, and that suddenly, in a moment, at the sound of the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will rise incorruptible, and we shall be changed." The Book of Revelation, the last book in the Bible, gives a more detailed account of what happens at the sound of the last trumpet: First, it is proclaimed in heaven that God the Father and Jesus Christ have now finally taken up

their reign. Then we see as a sign in heaven: a woman gives birth to a child, a dragon, Satan, wants to devour this child, but this child is taken away to God and to His throne. This woman is the Church of Jesus Christ, which brings forth a special group of people. This group of Christians is then caught up into heaven to God and to God's throne, while the church is transferred by God into the wilderness, where it is safe from Satan. A war now begins in heaven, in which the archangel Michael and his angels wage a war against Satan and his angels, which leads to Satan and all his angels being completely cast out of heaven to earth. And there is a loud shout of victory in heaven, which reads: "Now the salvation and power and kingship of our God and the authority of His anointed one have come, for the accuser of our brothers, who accused them before God day and night, has been thrown out. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death." (Rev. 12, 10 - 11). Jesus, who could say of himself "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." (Mt 28:18) obviously had to wait for a part of His body until He could fully develop this.

This victory is won when people truly accept the reality of Jesus' sacrifice and believe that it is stronger than all the power of the enemy and all the damage Satan has wrought in their lives and in every situation they face. The victory of Jesus works when we clearly witness it to others. And the victory of Jesus is especially effective when we no longer fear death, when the love of God, which does not seek its own, fascinates us so much that we want to live it at all costs, because it is so beautiful and good, because God is worth it, and because our lives rest in the powerful and at the same time very tender hand of God. When God's love falls into our hearts, it makes the impossible possible, in us and through us.

Later it says of this multitude: "They follow the Lamb wherever he goes" (Rev 14:4), that is, through humiliation, poverty, suffering and death, to resurrection, glory and a place at the right hand of God, high above all powers and authorities. The tribulation through which we now walk as followers of Jesus "brings an exceeding great weight of glory to us who do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." (2 Cor 4:17-18) Occasionally a little of this glory already flashes here on earth. But above all: "We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces patience, patience produces probation, and probation produces hope. Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Rom. 5, 3 - 5)

Paul writes in Philippians, the letter shortly before his death to the church that was closest to him and with which he had a particularly close relationship, that every Christian should have the same inner orientation as Jesus: be prepared to let go of everything and finally have nothing of your own, be prepared to go through humiliation, suffering and death in order to then be raised up by God to a new life, to a life in glory and to be exalted to a position far above all other positions. (Phil. 2, 5 - 11)

### **Why did Jesus choose this path, and why does He want us to follow it?**

I learned the phrase from Loren Cunningham, the founder of Youth with a Mission, a very experienced Christian. "If we want to defeat a spirit, we must come in the opposite spirit." Satan wants to live independently of God and therefore wants to accumulate as many possessions as possible, be powerful by his own strength, brutally assert his power everywhere at the expense of others. Jesus lived exactly the opposite: Dependent on God the Father, not manipulating or forcing anyone. That is why His obedience to God is always voluntary and full of trust, and His disciples' obedience to Him is also always voluntary. Jesus trusted that God would give Him everything He needed at the right time and that the Father would provide Him with justice at the right time. And that is exactly how Satan was defeated once and for all. If we live with this attitude, we will be free from all claims and all manipulation by Satan, and God wants to give us very rich gifts. When we live with Jesus in this way, we are taken into His nature, His being, and we receive His glory and share in His reign. This is how we find our true destiny.

When we are like this in Christ, we do not seek our own, because we have an identity in Christ and receive everything as a gift from the heavenly Father. We forget ourselves when we love, but it is precisely in this that we become an unmistakable and irreplaceable personality before God with our special gifts and ministries. We experience an inner unity in a great diversity.

It is very good if we can now experience redemption, liberation and renewal through Jesus and His precious closeness in many different ways here in this life. But our destiny goes far beyond this. We follow Jesus on His path of humiliation and suffering and death here on this earth, but also on His path of being raised up by God to a new life, of receiving God's glory and a position at the right hand of God, the highest authority in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:19). This is already true for us today. God has already raised us up together with Jesus and seated us on the throne together with Jesus (Eph. 2:6). In Romans, Paul writes: "The Spirit himself bears witness to our spirit that we are children of God. But if we are children, then we are also heirs: heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if we suffer with Him so that we may also receive glory together with Him." (Romans 8: 16-17) What we will receive from God is so much better and more beautiful than anything we have to endure now. "For the momentary (comparatively) small measure of affliction produces to a much greater degree an eternal weight of glory beyond measure for us who do not look at the visible but at the invisible, for the visible is momentary but the invisible is eternal. (2Co 4:17-18) "For I reckon that the sufferings now are not worth mentioning in comparison with the glory that will be revealed to us." (Rom 8:18)

### **Why is it that so few Christians are ready for this path?**

It seems to me that the enemy has a very strong interest in ensuring that he can continue to reign undisturbed and torment and terrorize the whole of creation and Christians in particular. That is why he wants to prevent Christians from making them-

selves completely available to God. Christians should be deterred from trusting God by a lack of trust in God, but instead try to protect themselves. Christians should be so preoccupied with the reality of their earthly lives that this alone fills their hearts, and be firmly convinced that their earthly lives are ultimately all that matters and that this is perfectly all right. So they have made themselves at home here on earth. And they are deeply convinced that what they know now is enough, and that they are decent and strong enough to cope with whatever is at hand.

### **What do we need to do?**

We must ask the Holy Spirit to open our eyes

- a) about God, the Almighty, who knows everything and knows us down to the last detail, who has love not only occasionally or often, but who is always love, because that is His nature and therefore wants to do good to all people and the whole of creation, and who is therefore completely trustworthy.
- b) about Jesus, His Son, who out of love became a man like us and through His death on the cross acquired for us a complete redemption and earned for us the right that everyone who accepts this. freedom from guilt, share in the divine nature and become a beloved child of God. He then becomes part of a great organism, which is called the body of Christ on the one hand and the bride of Christ on the other. Jesus was raised from the dead by the Father after His sacrificial death. He was placed by God in the highest place, high above all powers, authorities and authorities. But Jesus has made Himself so one with us that we are to share everything with Him, His glory, His riches, His place at the right hand of the Father in a unity that will never end.
- c) The Holy Spirit must open our eyes to the fact that He wants to live in us forever, that He helps us to understand the voice of God and thus also the Bible, that He enables us to do all that is necessary with joy, especially by pouring the love of God into our hearts, which we then only need to let out. He then shows us every moment what we need to do right now.
- d) We can ask the Holy Spirit to show us our situation, who we really are and what is hindering God from giving us His full blessing. God wants to give us salvation, renewal and abundant life. If we choose to walk with Him, He is so willing to really help us recognize what is still blocking us and get rid of it.
- e) Lord, show us what is close to your heart, what you desire!
- f) Be ready for everything God wants from you, even for completely unconventional ways!
- g) Learn to be dependent on God in everything, you cannot do it by your own insight and strength!
- h) Live in great anticipation of what awaits you.