



The Good News

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Fate and Destiny vs. Free Will

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Every time I think of the word “destiny” I think of the movie Star Wars in which Darth Vader tells Luke that “it is your destiny” to fall to the dark side. Of course, Luke does not fall to the dark side which suggests that Mr. Vader didn’t have the inside scoop on what “destiny” had in store. It is very common in our society for people to talk about fate and destiny as if they are facts of life. Consider the definitions of these words: Destiny is defined, “*something that is to happen or had happened to a particular person or thing; lot or fortune; the predetermined, usually inevitable or irresistible, course of events; the power or agency that determines the course of events*”. Fate is defined, “*that which is inevitably predetermined; destiny; a prophetic declaration of what must be*”. When considering these concepts along with the thought that God has given man free will to make his own decisions, the final two definitions for each of these words provoke us to look deeper and consider whether or not man truly has free will.

We can read numerous passages that describe aspects of what might be considered “fate” or “destiny”. Consider passages such as **Rom. 8:29-30** that use the term “*predestined*” as if only certain individuals will be saved. An interesting comparison of passages is **I Pet. 1:4** vs. **II Pet. 2:4, 9, 17** in which we read of salvation being reserved for some, and of judgment and condemnation being reserved for some. It’s almost as if God’s judgment is arbitrary if viewed outside of context. However, if we consider other passages and then the context of the aforementioned texts, it will become clear to us that free will is at the heart of all these passages. Consider **Matt. 7:24**, “*Therefore whoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.*” Now consider **vs. 26**, “*But everyone who hears these sayings of mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.*” Jesus brought the word of God to us, and that word included

certain things we are to “do”. There are consequences for both doing and for not doing, but the ultimate decision rests with us. In **James 4:4**, James says “*Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*” It appears that I have a choice in my decisions and conduct. Now let us consider the previous passages: In **Rom. 8:28-30**, Paul says “*And we know that all things work together of good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose,*” Paul begins by discussing those who love God. If I love God, I will do His commandments (**Jn. 14:15**). God “*foreknew*”, or decided before hand, the character of those whom He would allow to obtain eternal life. It would require a character that was willing to submit to the will of God and obey His word. These are predestined and reserved (**I Pet. 1:4**) for eternal life, but those who are not obedient are reserved for punishment (**II Pet. 2:4ff**). One thing that is outside of man’s free will is the fact that there will be a judgment. We cannot simply decide that we do not want to be judged. In **Jer. 10:23**, Jeremiah says “*O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.*” Consider that our context (**vs. 21-22, 24-25**) is dealing with judgment coming upon Judah. It is not in man to avoid judgment...this must occur. Consider the last definition of fate: “*a prophetic declaration of what must be*”. God has said there must be a judgment, and he has decided the standards of that judgment. It is not within us to avoid it, so let us prepare for it while we have the free will to do so.