

God's Eternal Decree

Definitions

- Westminster Shorter Catechism (Q. 7): "the decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever come to pass."
- F.H. Klooster: "a theological term for the comprehensive plan for the world and its history which God sovereignly established in eternity."
- Berkhof: "God has sovereignly determined from all eternity whatsoever will come to pass, and works his sovereign will in His entire creation, both natural and spiritual, according to His predetermined plan."
- Grudem: "the eternal plans of God whereby, before the creation of the world, he determined to bring about everything that happens."

Definitions

- Westminster: "God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: (Eph. 1:11; Rom. 11:33; Heb. 6:17; Rom. 9:15,18) yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, (James 1:13,17; 1 John 1:5) nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established (Acts 2:23; Matt. 17:12; Acts 4:27,28; John 19:11; Prov. 16:33) ."
- Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions (Acts 15:18; 1 Sam. 23:11,12; Matt. 11:21,23), yet hath he not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions (Rom. 9:11,13,16,18).

God's Will

- 1) God's moral will (will of precept or command) – commands and laws God lays down for his creatures which demand obedience but which man often disobeys.
- 2) God's sovereign will (will of decree) – the eternal, unchangeable, and immutable plan of God which is always carried out in human history.

The Ultimate Purpose

- The glory of God!
 - Creation (Ps. 19:1)
 - Election (Eph. 1:4-5, 6)

Biblical Arguments

- Ps. 103:19 –The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all.
- Ps. 115:3 – our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.
- Dan. 4:35 –"All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And *among* the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'
- Is. 44:6-8

Biblical Arguments

- Is. 46:10-11 – Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; 11 Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned *it*, surely I will do it.
- Acts 2:23 – this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.
- Rom. 8:28 -- we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

Biblical Arguments

- Rom. 11:36 – For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.
- 1 Cor. 15:27 – HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him.
- Eph. 3:11 – *This* was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,
- Eph. 1:9-11

Characteristics

- **One**
- **Comprehensive**

Comprehensive

- All events (Eph. 1:10-11; Acts 15:18; 17:26; Job 14:5; Is. 46:10)
- All the details of our lives (Job 14:5; Ps. 39:4)
- The free, righteous acts of man (Eph. 2:10)
- The free, wicked acts of man (Acts 2:23; 4:27, 28; Ps. 76:10; Pr. 16:4)
- Accidental or insignificant events (Pr. 16:33; Matt. 10:29)
- The means as well as the end (Ps. 119:89-91; Rom. 10:13-15; 2 Th. 2:13)
- It comprehends all things in heaven and on earth (Dan. 4:34-35)

Characteristics

- **One**
- **Comprehensive**
- **Free**
- **Eternal**
- **Wise**
- **Immutable**
- **Efficacious**
 - **Directive** – God determined to effect either through necessary causes or His own actions
 - **Permissive** – God determined to allow created free agents to effect

A Biblical Example

- Cf. Luke 22:22 – "For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!"
- Cf. Acts 2:23 – this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.
- Cf. Acts 4:27-28 – "For 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, 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur."

Man's Sin & the Eternal Decree

- God does not act upon and in our wills to cause the sin.
- Man's sin, however, is not simply passively permitted, out of God's control and separate from his plan.
- God's decree renders every sinful act absolutely certain.
- God simply determined:
 - a) not to hinder the sinful choices of the creature's will and
 - b) to direct and control the results of the sinner's choices to accomplish his own purposes.

Objections

- **Does not allow for man's free will**
- **Inconsistent with human responsibility**
- **Makes God the author of sin**

The Application

- Cause us to stand in awe of God (Rom. 11:33-36).
- Demolish all human pride (Pr. 19:21; Jam. 4:13-17).
- Encourage us to trust God with our lives (Ps. 33:10-11).
- Make us thankful for all God's blessings (Ps. 103:2; 1 Th. 5:18).
- Allow us to remain calm in the midst of the most troubling circumstances (Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28).
- Give us great peace in making decisions in life (Pro 16:9).
- Ensures the fulfillment of all prophecy and promise (Is. 14:24-27).