

The Decrees of God

Question 7. What are the decrees of God?

Answer: The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

1. What Are God's Decrees, and How Do They Affect Our Existence?

Key Texts: Ephesians 1:11; Isaiah 46:9–10; Romans 11:36; Proverbs 16:33

Notes:

1. **God's decrees are eternal**

God does not react or revise or “figure things out.”

God's will is not shaped by history - history is shaped by God's will.

2. **God's decrees are comprehensive**

“Whatsoever comes to pass.” Means no accidents or surprises.

Even events that seem random (Prov. 16:33) are within God's counsel.

God's will is the “foundation of all reality”

3. **The decrees are for God's glory**

God does not act for reasons beyond himself.

His glory is the display of his holiness, justice, mercy, and love.

If God sought something higher than his glory, he would deny who he is.

2. The “Secret” and “Revealed” Will of God

Key Texts: Deuteronomy 29:29; Acts 2:23; 1 Samuel 15:11,29, 16:1; Jeremiah 18:7-10

The Bible shows us two different aspects (revelations) of God’s will

1. God’s Secret will: what He has purposed
2. God’s Revealed will: what He commands.

Christ’s crucifixion violated God’s revealed will (“You shall not murder”), but fulfilled God’s secret will.

Questions:

1. *When someone sins, have they broken God’s will? In what sense yes - and in what sense no?*
2. *How do we reconcile the absolute assertion that God “foreordains everything”, and yet seemingly “repents” or changes His mind?*

2. What Is the Difference Between Calvinism and Arminianism?

Key Texts: Romans 8:29–30; Romans 3:24–26; John 6:37, 44

1. **Arminianism (classical form)**

Election is based on foreseen faith – “God chooses those whom he knows will choose him”

God’s decision is based on Justice – he cannot make a decision that is unjust. This is instinctively attractive to us – we understand justice, and expect God to hold to the same standard of justice we do.

Notice, however, the fatal flaw in Arminius’ worldview: God “binds” himself to our understanding of justice.

2. Reformed (Calvinist) teaching

Election is based on God’s will – God chooses, and then orders history to conform to His will.

Election does not depend on any action of man, and faith is the inevitable result of election.

God is not obligated to save anyone. Salvation is rooted not in human initiative but in divine mercy.

Questions:

- 1. Which view ultimately makes salvation more secure - election based on foreseen faith, or election grounded in God’s will?*

2. *Read Romans 3:24-25. How does God's will, God's Justice and God's Mercy all work together in this passage?*

3. Doesn't Predestination Make God Unjust or the Author of Sin?

Key Texts: Acts 2:23; James 1:13; Matthew 25:46

1. **God is not the author of sin**

The decree includes sin, but Scripture denies that God is the author of sin (James 1:13).

The crucifixion (Acts 2:23) in the light of Romans 3 shows both (a) Divine determination, and (b) Human guilt.

2. **Humans are not "pawns"**

The decree does not eliminate responsibility - People sin willingly.

Divine sovereignty and human responsibility are not contradictions but concurrent truths.

3. **"Double" or "Single" Predestination?**

Supralapsarianism – God "chooses" the destination of all. He specifically elects some, and specifically condemns others

Infralapsarianism – God decreed the fall into sin. From fallen humanity he elects some to salvation.

God condemns no one apart from sin.

Election is mercy; condemnation is justice.

Questions:

- 1. How does Acts 2:23 protect us from saying that God is the author of sin?*
- 2. Why is it pastorally important to stress that election is from fallen humanity?*

4. How Do God's Decrees Comfort Us and Guard Against Judgmentalism?

Key Texts: Romans 8:29–30; Ephesians 1:4–5

1. Comfort for believers

If salvation is by God's unbreakable decree, it does not:

- depend on our performance,
- wobble with our emotions,
- fail because of our weakness.

Romans 8:29–30 is an unbreakable chain.

2. Guarding against harshness

If election is unconditional, then we were not chosen because we were better, and therefore cannot boast.

If we do not know God's secret will for others, then we cannot judge, but instead are driven towards gospel invitation and evangelism.

Questions:

- 1. How does this doctrine strengthen assurance rather than weaken it?*
- 2. How should the doctrine of election shape the way we pray for loved ones who are drifting from the faith?*