

- Q7. What are the decrees of God?
A7. **The decrees of God are, his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.**

Scripture References: Ephesians 1:4, 11, 2:10; Acts 2:23, 4:27-28; Romans 9:22-33, 11:33; Psalm 33:11; Isaiah 46:10

DQ1: When did God determine His decrees?

DQ2: For what purpose did God decree?

DQ3: What did God foreordain?

DQ4: According to what did God foreordain?

DQ5: How long are God's decrees effective?

DQ6: Whose counsel does God seek?

DQ7: How did God declare His decrees?

Notes:

God does not do anything without first planning what He desires to accomplish. God does not make decisions along the way. The fact that God is God is borne out by the fact that God is able to accomplish every bit of what He has foreordained perfectly and without error. God is capable of carrying out what He has foreordained because He is sovereign. Man, on the other hand, cannot perfectly plan or accomplish what he plans. Man does not have the sovereign quality as does God. The sovereignty of God is what clearly sets God apart from man.

God does not waste any of His decrees. All He decrees are accomplished. Consider Isaiah 55:11. What happens to all that proceeds from His mouth? Nothing of God returns void or empty. The Isaiah passage provides a glimpse of God's decrees and foreordination. As He speaks and desires, all things come to pass. That is His decree. If this were not so, God would not be God.

God foreordained all things for all eternity. The timing of God's decree is before the creation of this world from our perspective and is from eternity before. Even God's creation was decreed as foreordained. "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." (John 1:3) When a house is built, an architectural drawing precedes any construction. God had a design in mind before the creation.

God, among other things, foreordained man's salvation, which remains the central theme of His decrees. "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will." (Ephesians 1:4-5)

The ultimate purpose of God's decrees is upholding of His own glory. Apostle Paul expresses it as follows: "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen." (Romans 11:36)

God said regarding His glory, among other things, as follows:

- "I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols." (Isaiah 42:8)
- "Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth — everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." (Isaiah 43:6-7)
- "For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another." (Isaiah 48:11)

God's decrees apply to all things without exception. Nothing occurs, even the smallest things, without God's decree. "In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will." (Ephesians 1:11)

Nothing occurs by chance or escapes God's decrees. Even when man does not or cannot understand them, God's decrees are carried out perfectly in all things and God has proper purposes and reasons behind His every decree. In reality, God is under no duty or obligation to disclose the purposes or reasons for His decrees to man. Yet, God saw it fit to invite man to participate in His decrees by making them appropriately known to man. "'Come now, let us reason together.' says the Lord." (Isaiah 1:18)

While man may not know or understand them, God's decrees are always certain as to why, when, what, who and how such decrees unfold. It is through the Scriptures that God has given man knowledge and understanding regarding certain details of His decrees, particularly regarding God's salvation plan for man.

God decrees all things in accordance with His purposes and plans. Man also does things in accordance with his purposes and plans. The difference is that God does so in accordance with His eternal purposes. This is not possible with man.

God always plans and accomplishes what He sets out to accomplish. The plan of man can and does change from moment to moment and from circumstance to circumstance. But, God's plans are eternally unchangeable. The reason for this is that God's decrees are made in accordance with His eternal purposes. Therefore, there is no expiration date for God's decrees. His decrees are effective today as they were before the creation of this world. His decrees stand now and as always. They were, are and will continue as if there is no time difference.

It is impossible for all of what the mankind experiences throughout history in terms of wars, hunger, disasters, accidents, sicknesses, deaths, etc. to have occurred outside of God's eternally decreed purposes and plans.

Apostle Paul spoke these words relating to God's decrees: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified." (Romans 8:28-30)

The Scriptures unequivocally speak of the doctrine of predestination, which is an essential truth of the Scriptures. Apart from the doctrine of predestination, God's plan of salvation of man cannot be properly explained or understood.

Misunderstanding regarding the doctrine of predestination can occur, however. We will provide a short dissertation on the wrong views or conclusions regarding the doctrine of predestination.

First, because A7 says that God foreordained everything, it does not follow that sin came from God as well. Admittedly, the origin of sin is not easy to explain but the Scriptures are clear on this issue and we must rely upon the teachings of the Scriptures.

- "You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with you the wicked cannot dwell." (Psalm 5:4)
- "When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed." (James 1:13-14)
- "This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5-6)

Sin entered through Satan and therefore Satan is the author of sin. It is absolutely incorrect to say that God created sin. At creation, God created and declared all things as "good," without sin. But, Satan lured man into sin and sin became revealed. It is true that God created man and angels who were vulnerable to sin, and intentionally so, but God did not create sin in way, shape or form. Apostle James concluded that sin entered man because man, by his own desire, was dragged away and enticed into sin.

The doctrine of predestination must be handled with care. It must be understood to say that God foreordained all things and that God has nothing to do with sin. This is the teaching of the Scriptures.

Second, people often raise the question as to why the church should bother with evangelism efforts if everyone is predestined. Jesus came to seek His lost sheep. If everyone is predestined, then why did Jesus bother coming? Why did he come to suffer pains, humiliation and death? Did Jesus not know about predestination? God forbid! Jesus came because He clearly understood predestination and wanted to fulfill it. There is a mysterious harmony that may be difficult to grasp. Therefore, one can strongly argue that evangelism is a seeking process of those who are predestined, just as Jesus showed. Jesus gave the Great Commission to His church and wanted to make certain that those who have been foreordained and predestined are accounted for. Even if we did not understand or could not fully explain the harmony, we must accept the

existence of such a harmony in light of Jesus' coming to save the lost. This is the teaching of the Scriptures.

God has declared his decrees through His messengers throughout history and through the Messiah Jesus as well as the Scriptures.

Westminster Confession of Faith
CHAPTER III
Of God's Eternal Decree

1. God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass:[a] yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin,[b] nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.[c]

[a]. Ps. 33:11; Eph. 1:11; Heb. 6:17

[b]. Ps. 5:4; James 1:13-14; 1 John 1:5; see Hab. 1:13

[c]. Acts 2:23; Matt. 17:12; Acts 4:27-28; John 19:11; Prov. 16:33

2. Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions,[d] yet hath he not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.[e]

[d]. I Sam. 23:11-12; Matt. 11:21, 23

[e]. Rom. 9:11, 13, 16, 18

3. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels[f] are predestinated unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death.[g]

[f]. I Tim. 5:21; Jude 6; Matt. 25:31, 41

[g]. Eph. 1:5-6; Rom. 9:22-23; Prov. 16:4

4. These angels and men, thus predestinated, and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.[h]

[h]. John 13:18; II Tim. 2:19; see John 10:14-16, 27, 28; John 17:2, 6, 9-12

5. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen, in Christ, unto everlasting glory,[i] out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto:[k] and all to the praise of his glorious grace.[l]

[i]. Eph. 1:4, 9, 11; Rom. 8:28-30; II Tim. 1:9; I Thess. 5:9

[k]. Rom. 9:11, 13, 15-16; Eph. 2:8-9; see Eph. 1:5, 9, 11

[l]. Eph. 1:6, 12

6. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto.[m] Wherefore, they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ,[n] are effectually called unto faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified,[o] and kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation.[p]

Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.[q]

[m]. I Pet. 1:2; Eph. 2:10; II Thess. 2:13

[n]. I Thess. 5:9-10; Titus 2:14

[o]. Rom. 8:30; see Eph. 1:5; II Thess. 2:13

[p]. I Pet 1:5

[q]. John 10:14-15, 26; John 6:64-65; Rom. 8:28-39; see John 8:47; John 17:9; I John 2:19

7. The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extends or withholds mercy, as he pleases, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by; and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.[r]

[r]. Matt. 11:25-26; Rom. 9:17-18, 21-22; Jude 4; I Pet. 2:8; II Tim. 2:19-20

8. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care,[s] that men, attending the will of God revealed in his Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election.[t] So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God;[u] and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel.[w]

[s]. Rom. 9:20; Rom. 11:33; Deut. 29:29

[t]. II Pet. 1:10; I Thess. 1:4-5

[u]. Eph. 1:6; see Rom. 11:33

[w]. Rom. 11:5-6, 20; Rom. 8:33; Luke 10:20; see II Pet. 1:10

We are able to comfortably depend upon God on a daily basis because of God's decrees. God knows our every move and has an eternal purpose for each of us. This is why the Psalmist was able to confess in Psalm 23 as follows:

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Are we truly depending upon God's decrees?

Do we truly believe we are the chosen of God?