

Q8: How does God execute his decrees?
A8: **God executes his decrees in the works of creation and providence.**

Scripture References: Genesis 1:1; Hebrews 11:3; Revelation 4:11; Ephesians 1:11; Daniel 4:35; Isaiah 40:26

DQ1: What are the areas in which God's decrees apply?

DQ2: What is creation?

DQ3: What is providence of God? (This is a very difficult question for most people. See if you could come up with a definition of "providence" from the proof texts given.)

DQ4: How did creation come about?

DQ5: How did creation look to God initially?

DQ6: What is the significance of the doctrine of creation?

DQ7: How are the works of creation different from the works of providence?

Notes:

God's decrees are displayed in both His creation and His providence. Creation and providence are two distinct areas in which God's decrees are demonstrated. In fact, God's decrees apply in everything, in all things and at all times.

Creation is the doctrine, the truth and the historical fact that God created the entire universe out of nothing. Creation speaks of how the entire created universe came into being. It is the handy work of God. As He spoke, the entire universe was spewed out of the mouth of God. God is the cause, origin and maker of the universe. Creation rejects the idea that the universe and the human beings are consequences of chances or random occurrences of events. Creation teaches that the universe is subject to the control and rule of God.

There is nothing in creation that is out of the control or rule of God. This is so because of God's decrees relating to creation.

Providence is "the doctrine that God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he (1) keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them; (2) cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do; and (3) directs them to fulfill his purposes." (Grudem, Systematic Theology, p. 1252)

Simply put, providence is the way in which God continually exercises His sovereign control over the entire universe. Therefore, all things are within the providence of God.

Creation speaks to the event and providence speaks to the process. If creation brought the universe into existence, then providence is what maintains the universe until the return of the

Lord Jesus Christ. Both creation and providence perfectly comply with and conform to God's decrees or plans. The Scriptures speak of creation and providence as true and factual, not as theoretical. In fact, if creation and providence were not true or factual, then all of what the Scriptures teach would also have to fall. The Scriptures are, however, both bold and confident of the claims of creation and providence. As Christians, we must be bold and confident of these claims of the Scriptures. Creation and providence are foundational to Christians.

Many people believe in a God because they believe in creation. But, a mere acceptance of the doctrine of creation does not make one a Christian. A Christian must believe not only in creation but also trust and dependent upon the person and redemptive work of Jesus Christ as the exclusive means by which one may be saved.

The secular world speaks of the "theory" of evolution as the way in which the world came into existence. Suffice it to say that it still remains and will continue to remain a theory. It is not a truth or fact. It can never be a truth or fact because its focus is misplaced. Evolution's assumptions and presuppositions are also misplaced. Evolution by definition must reject that there is a Creator God who decreed all things into existence and to be kept in accordance with His exacting rules and standards throughout the history.

Evolution denies both creation, God as the maker, and providence, God as the keeper. Evolution is dishonest, blinded and false.

Evolution is, at best, a feeble attempt understand the universe. There is no special place for human beings in evolution. Human beings are merely a stage of unexplainable continuum of chances and accidents. Evolution makes no distinction between human beings and animals in contravention of the Scriptures. Although love is described as the greatest thing in the Scriptures, love has no place in evolution. Nor can it be explained. Evolution is not concerned with righteousness, justice and forgiveness. Evolution does not and cannot address any of the spiritual aspects of human beings. Evolution treats human beings as aspiritual.

Creation came about at the command of God. "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." (Genesis 1:3) This command sets the pattern for everything else except for creation of man. Man was not commanded into being. Man was fashioned by the very hand of God and received the breath of God. "And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being." (Genesis 2:7) And a significance of creation is that there is God who created, ordered and maintains the universe and that there is no denying of Him.

God looked at all He created and repeatedly said they look good. God was pleased and was satisfied with His own work. Creation is a powerful revelation of God to its creatures. Therefore, the creatures have no excuse but to acknowledge God the Creator. (Romans 1:18)

One aspect of providence is the idea that Christ is "upholding the universe by his word of power." (Hebrews 1:3) It means that "Jesus is '*continually* carrying all things' in the universe by his word of power. Christ is actively involved in the work of providence. (Grudem, Systematic Theology, p. 316)

In Colossians 1:17, "Paul says of Christ that 'in him all things hold together.'" (Grudem, Systematic Theology, p. 316)

"In him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

"You are the Lord, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them." (Nehemiah 9:6)

"If he should take back his spirit to himself, and gather to himself his breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust." (Job 34:14-15, also Psalm 104:29)

All these passages speak of how God preserves by way of actively carrying and upholding everything in the universe including supplying the very breath to man. In other words, if God did not carry or uphold the universe or supply the breath to man, the universe would fall apart and man would die.

The fact that the universe exists and man lives is the preserving providence of God. Science would not be possible without God's preserving providence.

Another aspect of providence is that God works with and requires everything in the universe to respond to Him in accordance with the unique nature and purpose of each creation. We will look at those passages that apply to man in terms how God touches all aspects of our lives.

Matthew 6:11
Philippians 4:19

Psalm 139:16
Job 14:5
Galatians 1:15
Jeremiah 1:15

Acts 17:28
Jeremiah 10:23
Proverbs 20:24
Proverbs 16:9

Psalm 75:6-7
Luke 1:52
Psalm 127:3

1 Corinthians 4:7
Psalm 18:34

Proverbs 21:1
Ezra 6:22
Ezra 1:1
Psalm 33:14-15

Philippians 2:13

The final aspect of providence is that God uses all things to fulfill His purposes, both good and evil.

Romans 8:28

Genesis 50:20

Psalms 76:10

Romans 9:14-24

God's decrees are clearly evident in creation and providence of God. Therefore, every experience is an unfolding of God's decrees.

How should you embrace creation and providence of God?

How should God's providence influence your decisions and actions?

How should God's providence affect your trust in God?

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CHAPTER IV

Of Creation

1. It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,[a] for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness,[b] in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days; and all very good.[c]

[a]. Rom. 11:36; I Cor. 8:6; Heb. 1:2; John 1:2-3; Gen. 1:2; Job 33:4

[b]. Rom. 1:20; Jer. 10:12; Ps. 104:24; Ps. 33:5

[c]. Gen. 1:1-31; Ps. 33:6; Heb. 11:3; Col. 1:16; Acts 17:24; Exod. 20:11

2. After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female,[d] with reasonable and immortal souls,[e] endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after his own image,[f] having the law of God written in their hearts,[g] and power to fulfill it:[h] and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject unto change.[i] Beside this law written in their hearts, they received a command, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which while they kept, they were happy in their communion with God,[k] and had dominion over the creatures.[l]

[d]. Gen. 1:27

[e]. Gen. 2:7; Ecc. 12:7; Luke 23:43; Matt. 10:28

[f]. Gen. 1:26; Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24

[g]. Rom. 2:14-15

[h]. Gen. 2:17; Ecc. 7:29

[i]. Gen. 3:6, 17

[k]. Gen. 2:17; Gen. 2:15-3:24

[l]. Gen. 1:28; see Gen. 1:29-30; Ps. 8:6-8

Westminster Confession of Faith
CHAPTER V
Of Providence

1. God the great Creator of all things doth uphold,[a] direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things,[b] from the greatest even to the least,[c] by his most wise and holy providence,[d] according to his infallible foreknowledge,[e] and the free and immutable counsel of his own will,[f] to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.[g]

[a]. Neh. 9:6; Ps. 145:14-16; Heb. 1:3

[b]. Dan. 4:34-35; Ps. 135:6; Acts 17:25-28; Job 38:1-41:34

[c]. Matt. 10:29-31, see Matt. 6:26-32

[d]. Prov. 15:3; II Chron. 16:9; Ps. 104:24; Ps. 145:17

[e]. Acts 15:18; Isa. 42:9; Ezek. 11:5

[f]. Eph. 1:11; Ps. 33:10-11

[g]. Isa. 63:14; Eph. 3:10; Rom. 9:17; Gen. 45:7; Ps. 145:7

2. Although, in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first Cause, all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly;[h] yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.[i]

[h]. Acts 2:23; see Isa. 14:24, 27

[i]. Gen. 8:22; Jer. 31:55; Isa. 10:6-7; see Exod. 21:13; and Deut. 19:5; I Kings 22:28-34

3. God, in his ordinary providence, makes use of means,[k] yet is free to work without,[l] above,[m] and against them, at His pleasure.[n]

[k]. Acts 27:24, 31, 44; Isa. 55:10-11

[l]. Hos. 1:7; Matt. 4:4; Job 34:20

[m]. Rom. 4:19-21

[n]. II Kings 6:6; Dan. 3:27

4. The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in his providence, that it extends itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men;[o] and that not by a bare permission,[p] but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding,[q] and otherwise ordering, and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends;[r] yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceeds only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.[s]

[o]. Isa. 45:7; Rom. 11:32-34; II Sam. 16:10; Acts 2:23; Acts 4:27-28; see II Sam. 24:1 and I Chron. 21:1; I Kings 22:22-23; I Chron. 10:4, 13-14

[p]. John 12:40; II Thess. 2:11

[q]. Ps. 76:10; II Kings 19:28

[r]. Gen. 50:20; Isa. 10:12; see verses 6-7, 13-15

[s]. James 1:13-14, 17; I John 2:16; Ps. 50:21

5. The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave, for a season, his own children to manifold temptations, and the corruption of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled;[t] and, to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support

upon himself, and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for sundry other just and holy ends.[u]

[t]. II Chron. 32:25-26, 31; Deut. 8:2-3, 5; Luke 22:31-32; see II Sam. 24:1, 25

[u]. II Cor. 12:7-9; see Ps. 73:1-28; Ps. 77:1-12; Mark 14:66-72; John 21:15-19

6. As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as a righteous Judge, for former sins, doth blind and harden,[w] from them he not only withhold his grace whereby they might have been enlightened in their understandings, and wrought upon in their hearts;[x] but sometimes also withdraws the gifts which they had,[y] and exposes them to such objects as their corruptions make occasions of sin;[z] and, withal, gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan,[a] whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves, even under those means which God uses for the softening of others.[b]

[w]. Rom. 1:24, 26, 28; Rom. 11:7-8

[x]. Deut. 29:4; Mark 4:11-12

[y]. Matt. 13:12; Matt. 25:29; see Acts 13:10-11

[z]. Gen. 4:8; II Kings 8:12-13; see Matt. 26:14-16

[a]. Ps. 109:6; Luke 22:3; II Thess. 2:10-12

[b]. Exod. 8:15, 32; II Cor. 2:15-16; Isa. 8:14; I Pet. 2:7-8; see Exod. 7:3; Isa. 6:9-10; Acts 28:26-27

7. As the providence of God doth, in general, reach to all creatures; so, after a most special manner, it takes care of his church, and disposes all things to the good thereof.[c]

[c]. I Tim. 4:10; Amos 9:8-9; Matt. 16:18; Rom. 8:28; Isa. 43:3-5, 14
