

Theology Proper

Part 4 - The Decrees of God

Is God powerful enough to do whatever He truly wants to do?

Is God the sovereign King of the universe?

Can any created thing overrule God's authority or power in any way?

- **What are the decrees of God?**

The decrees of God are His eternal purpose in and sovereignty over all things, according to His will and for His glory.

God is sovereign over **all** that happens.

*Isaiah 45:5-7 – “I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. **I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.**”*

*Psalm 33:11 – “The **counsel** of the LORD **stands forever**, the **plans of his heart** to all generations.”*

Without doubt, the most horrible and evil act of all time was the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. That is why it is the quintessential demonstration of God's eternal purpose and sovereign control in all that comes to pass.

*Acts 2:22-24 – “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know — [T]his Jesus, delivered up **according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God**, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.”*

God has an eternal and divine **purpose** for all things.

*Isaiah 14:24 – “The LORD of hosts has sworn: “**As I have planned, so shall it be, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.**”*

It is not just that God 'allows' things to take place or simply that He only knows what will happen, but the Bible describes God's role as one of supreme governor of all. His is a purposeful sovereignty.

God does all things according to His sovereign **will** and for His **glory**.

Job 38:1-7 – *“Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me.*

“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

It is impossible for us to peer into the ultimate “why” behind the purposes and plan of God. This, however, does not mean that there is none. In fact, the Bible declares that God does everything according to “the counsel of” His will and in order to glorify Himself.

We may be completely unable to see God’s purposes or understand His ultimate will in many things that our loved ones and we experience. It is not for us to demand that God give an explanation for His decrees. It is for us to glorify God in response to His display of power and majestic authority.

- **How does God execute his decrees?**

God executes His decrees in the works of creation and providence (#1 & 2).

1. God executes His decrees in **Creation**.

Genesis 1:1-3 – *“In the beginning, **God created the heavens and the earth.** The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And **God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.**”*

Isaiah 40:25-26 – *“To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who **brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing.**”*

Revelation 4:11 – *“**Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.**”*

- **What is the work of creation?**

The work of creation is, God's making all things of nothing, by the word of His power, and all very good.

Creation was *ex nihilo*.

Question: What does it mean that God created everything *Ex Nihilo* or Out of Nothing?

God, the self-existing, eternal being, created everything from nothing (Genesis 1:1; Hebrews 11:3).

Creation was by divine *fiat*.

Psalm 33:6-9 – *“By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.”*

The ultimate demonstration of power is the divine fiat of God. He speaks; it is (Genesis 1:3; Psalm 148:1–6).

Creation was, in the beginning, very *good*.

Genesis 1:31 – *“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.”*

- **How did God create humanity?**

God created humans, male and female, after His own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.

God created *male* and *female* in His own image.

Genesis 1:27 – *“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”*

Question: What implication(s) do you see resulting from God placing His “image” in humanity?

God created humans with **knowledge**.

Colossians 3:9-10 – “Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”

God created humans **righteous and holy**.

Ephesians 4:22-24 – “[P]ut off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Paul addresses the natural state of humanity, after the fall, and says that Christians, because of the work of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, are new or restored selves. Believers are righteous and holy, as God made all things from the beginning. It only takes a brief observation, however, to realize that we are not practically righteous or holy. Ours, if we are numbered among God’s people, is an alien or foreign righteousness and holiness, namely from Jesus Christ.

God created humans to have dominion over other **creatures**.

Genesis 1:26 – “Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

God created humanity, in His image; therefore, God defines the value of each human. This truth is the basis for the value of human life above all other created things, no matter what contribution each human may or may not make to others in society.

2. God executes His degrees in **Providence**.

Psalms 148:7-8 – “Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all deeps, fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy wind fulfilling his word!”

Just as mentioned earlier, the crucifixion of Christ was according to the *plan* and *foreknowledge* of God (Acts 4:24–28).

- **What are God’s works of providence?**

God’s works of providence are, His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures, and all their actions.

God's works of providence are *holy, wise and powerful*.

Psalm 145:17 – *“The LORD is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works.”*

Psalm 104:24-25 – *“O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great.”*

Hebrews 1:3 – *“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.”*

God *preserves and governs* all His creatures and all their actions.

Proverbs 16:33 – *“The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.”*

Matthew 10:29-30 – *“[Jesus said:] Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.”*

Ephesians 1:16-23

From the smallest roll of the dice to the greatest decision made by the ruler of a nation, God is providential over all. This causes humanity to marvel at the magnitude and wobble under the weight of God's authority and power.

Question: How does the biblical concept of God's providence differ from other attempts to explain the governing (or lack thereof) of the universe?