

## Lecture 6 – The Bible on God’s Decrees

\*All Bible quotes are from NASB unless noted otherwise.

**Questions we will ponder** – Does God act according to a decree He has already planned in eternity past or does He decide what to do as He sees the history of our universe unfold? Does God “foresee” future events and then predict them or does He know the events because they are part of His decree and then predict them?

The decree of God can also be labeled His plan. Providence is the theological term describing how God implements His plan/decreed in His universe. We discussed Providence in Lecture 2 under general sovereignty and specific sovereignty.

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

(Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 3:1)

**Deuteronomy 29:29** "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

**Deuteronomy 29:29** "The LORD our God has secrets known to no one. We are not accountable for them, but we and our children are accountable forever for all that he has revealed to us, so that we may obey all the terms of these instructions. (Deut. 29:29 NLT)

### 1. God’s decree/plan is exhaustive and comprehensive in all spheres and based on His will/purposes alone.

**Ephesians 1:10-11** with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is*, the summing up of all things in Christ, things **in the heavens and things on the earth**. In Him <sup>11</sup> also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His **purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will**.

**Psalms 103:19** The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His **sovereignty rules over everything**.

**Psalms 115:3** But our God is in the heavens; He **does** whatever He pleases.

**Romans 11:33-35** Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! **How unsearchable are his judgments (decrees) and how fathomless his ways!** <sup>34</sup> **For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?** <sup>35</sup> Or who has first given to God, that God needs to repay him? <sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and to him are **all things**.

**Psalms 135:6** Whatever the LORD pleases, He **does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps**.

**Proverbs 16:4** The LORD has **made everything for its own purpose**, Even the wicked for the day of evil.

**Proverbs 16:33** The lot is cast into the lap, But its **every decision** is from the LORD.

**Matthew 10:29-30** "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And *yet* **not one of them** will fall to the ground apart from your Father. <sup>30</sup> "But the very hairs of your head are **all numbered**.

**Lamentations 3:37** Whose command **was ever fulfilled unless the Lord decreed it?** (NET)

**Amos 3:6** If an alarm sounds in a city, do people not fear? If disaster overtakes a city, **is the LORD not responsible?** (NET)

**Romans 9:11** for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, **so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls**.

**Romans 11:5** In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a **remnant according to God's gracious choice**.

### 2. God’s decree/plan is for His glory.

**Romans 11:36** For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. **To Him be the glory forever**. Amen.

**Ephesians 1:4-6** just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love <sup>5</sup> He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the **kind intention of His will**, <sup>6</sup> **to the praise of the glory** of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

**Ephesians 1:12** to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to **the praise of His glory**.

**Ephesians 1:14** who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, **to the praise of His glory.**

### 3. God's decree/plan is eternal.

**Ephesians 3:11** *This was* in accordance with the **eternal purpose** which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,  
**2 Timothy 1:9** who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to **His own purpose and grace** which was granted us in Christ Jesus **from all eternity.**

**Titus 1:2** in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before **eternal ages.**

**Psalms 33:11** The **counsel** of the LORD stands **forever**, The plans of His heart from generation to generation.

**Isaiah 37:26** "Have you not heard? Long ago I did it, From **ancient times I planned it.** Now I have brought it to pass, That you should turn fortified cities into ruinous heaps.

**2 Thessalonians 2:13** But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you **from the beginning** for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

**Matthew 25:34** "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you **from the foundation of the world.**

**Jeremiah 31:3** The LORD appeared to him from afar, *saying*, "I have loved you with an **everlasting love**; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.

### 4. God's decree/plan is unchangeable and irrevocable

**Romans 11:29** for the gifts and the **calling of God are irrevocable.**

**Malachi 3:6** "For I, the LORD, **do not change**; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

**James 1:17** All generous giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is **no variation or the slightest hint of change.** (NET)

**Numbers 23:19** "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, **that He should repent**; Has He said, and will He not do it? **Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?**

**Hebrews 6:16-18** For men swear by one greater *than themselves*, and with them an oath *given* as confirmation is an end of every dispute. <sup>17</sup> In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise **the unchangeableness of His purpose**, interposed with an oath, <sup>18</sup> so that by two unchangeable things in which **it is impossible for God to lie**, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

### 5. God's decree/plan is efficacious (it will always come to pass and never fail)

**Isaiah 14:24** The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, "**Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand,**

**Isaiah 14:27** "For the LORD of hosts has **planned**, and **who can frustrate it?** And as for His stretched-out hand, **who can turn it back?"**

**Isaiah 46:9-11** "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me, <sup>10</sup> 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**'; <sup>11</sup> 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.**

**Daniel 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?**'

**Isaiah 45:9** "Woe to *the one* who quarrels with his Maker-- An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, 'What are you doing?' Or the thing you are making *say*, 'He has no hands '? <sup>10</sup> "Woe to him who says to a father, 'What are you begetting?' Or to a woman, 'To what are you giving birth?'" <sup>11</sup> Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: "Ask Me about the **things to come** concerning My sons, And you shall commit to Me the work of My hands. <sup>12</sup> "It is I who made the earth, and created man upon it. I stretched out the heavens with My hands And I **ordained** all their host. <sup>13</sup> "I have aroused him in righteousness And I will **direct all his ways**; He will build My city and will let My exiles go free, Without any payment or reward," says the LORD of hosts.

**Jeremiah 23:20** "The anger of the LORD will not turn back **Until He has performed and carried out the purposes of His**

**heart**; In the last days you will clearly understand it.

**Revelation 17:17** "For God has put it in their hearts to execute **His purpose** by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, **until the words of God will be fulfilled**.

## 6. God's decree/plan includes the details of mankind's life

**Psalm 139:16** Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; **And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me**, When as yet there was not one of them.

**Job 14:5** "Since **his days are determined**, The number of his months is with You; **And his limits You have set** so that he cannot pass.

**Psalm 31:15** My **times are in Your hand**; Deliver me from the hand of my enemies and from those who persecute me.

**Proverbs 19:21** There are many **plans** in a person's mind, but it is the **counsel** of the LORD which will stand. (NET)

**Proverbs 20:24** The steps of a person are **ordained** by the LORD— so how can anyone understand his own way? (NET)

**Jeremiah 10:23** I know, O LORD, that a **man's way is not in himself**, Nor is it in a man who walks **to direct his [own] steps**.

**Jeremiah 10:23** LORD, we know that **people do not control their own destiny**. It is not in their power to **determine** what will happen to them. (NET)

**Psalm 37:23** The **steps** of a man **are established by the LORD**, And He delights in his way.

**James 4:14** Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. <sup>15</sup> Instead, *you ought* to say, "**If the Lord wills**, we will live and also do this or that."

## 7. God's decree/plan involves aspects of salvation

**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!"

**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.

**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, <sup>28</sup> to do whatever Your hand and **Your purpose predestined to occur**.

**Revelation 13:8** All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of **the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world**. (NKJ)

**1 Peter 1:19** but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ. <sup>20</sup> For He was **foreknown before the foundation of the world**, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you.

**Romans 9:11** for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that **God's purpose according to His choice would stand**, not because of works but because of Him who calls,

**Ephesians 1:4-6** just as He **chose us in Him before the foundation of the world**, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love <sup>5</sup> He **predestined** us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the **kind intention of His will**.

**2 Thessalonians 2:13** But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has **chosen you from the beginning for salvation** through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

**James 1:18** In the **exercise of His will He brought us forth** by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

**Romans 9:16-18** So then it *does* not *depend* on the **man who wills** or the man who runs, **but on God** who has mercy. <sup>17</sup>For the scripture says to Pharaoh: "For this **very purpose I have raised you up**, that I may **demonstrate my power** in you, and that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth." <sup>18</sup> So then, **God has mercy on whom he chooses to have mercy, and he hardens whom he chooses to harden**.

**Revelation 17:8** "The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, **whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world**, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.

**John 1:13** who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh **nor of the will of man, but of God**.

**1 Corinthians 1:30-31** But by **His doing** you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,<sup>31</sup> so that, just as it is written, "**LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.**"

**8. God's decree/plan involves evil, suffering, and ultimate vindication of evil. There is no purposeless evil.**

**1 Peter 3:17** For it is better, **if God should will it so, that you suffer** for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

**1 Peter 4:19** Therefore, those also **who suffer according to the will of God** shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

**Genesis 45:5-8** "Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for **God sent me before you** to preserve life. <sup>6</sup> "For the famine *has been* in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. <sup>7</sup> "**God sent me before you** to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. <sup>8</sup> "Now, **therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God**; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

**Genesis 50:20** "As for you, you meant evil against me, *but God meant it for good* in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.

**Acts 3:18** "But the things which **God announced beforehand** by the mouth of all the prophets, that His **Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.**

**Isaiah 45:7** I am the one who **forms light and creates darkness**; the one who brings about peace and creates calamity. I am the LORD, **who accomplishes all these things.** (NET)

**Romans 8:28** And 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.

*The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave for a season his own children to manifold temptations and the corruptions 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; 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 other just and holy ends. So that whatsoever befalls any of his elect is by his appointment, for his glory, and their good.*

(London Baptist Confession 1689- Divine Providence, 5).