

**Question 10.** *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.*

**I. “The decrees of God...”**

A. When we speak of the decrees of God, many may come to mind. God’s decree to create the world (Gen. 1:1), God’s decree to make man in His image (Gen. 1:26-27), God’s decree in salvation (Eph. 1:4,11), God’s decree to make the New Heavens and the New Earth (Rev. 21:5), and God’s decree to punish the wicked (Matt. 25:41).

B. Some take issue with speaking of the plurality of God’s decree.<sup>18</sup> One may say that because of divine simplicity, God would only have one single decree for His glory to be known and magnified, and inside that decree will be many expressions of it, but they are not each decrees in and of themselves.

1. Though this has valid points and the argumentation makes some sense, it appears to be an unnecessary issue given that it would create confusion and potential mixture in God’s decree(s), some being to create, some being to redeem, and some being to condemn.

**II. “His eternal purpose...”**

A. The Greek word here for purpose means “to set forth” or “determine.” In other words, this is to speak of God’s eternal plan. This is not to be confused with the will of God; for the plan of God is the result of the will of God (that is going to be touched on later in the catechism’s answer).

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<sup>18</sup> Jim Scott Orrick, *A Commentary on The Baptist Catechism*, (Founders Press, 2025), 62.

B. We note here that God's purpose is eternal because God is eternal. Therefore, God's decrees are also eternal because they flow from His eternal purpose.

1. We must then conclude that God's decree of salvation and His decree of reprobation are eternal and unchanging.

a) **Ephesians 1:4-5 (LSB):** *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love, 5 by predestining us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will*

b) **Romans 9:19-23 (LSB):** *You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" 20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? Will the thing molded say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this"? 21 Or does not the potter have authority over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? 22 And what if God, wanting to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath having been prepared for destruction, 23 and in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory*

2. If God's decrees are based upon His eternal purpose, His eternal "setting forth" or "determining," and His purpose is eternal and unchanging, His decrees therefore are fixed and guaranteed. This means that God has already determined and decreed who will be saved and who will be condemned.

a) **Jonah 2:9 (LSB):** *...Salvation belongs to Yahweh.*

III. **“According to the counsel of His will, whereby for His own glory...”**

A. All of God’s decrees and all of the plans, which precede the decrees in the eternal order, conform to God's current glory and to God’s future glory. Everything flows from God and through His perfect will, which is forever aimed at His own glory.

1. **John 12:27-28 (LSB):** *“Now My soul has become dismayed; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”*

B. Everything that happens and takes place in the universe is for God’s glory. All of it. This includes both saving sinners and condemning sinners. God is just as glorified in His plan of salvation as He is in His plan of judgment.

1. **Ephesians 1:11 (LSB):** *In Him, we also have been made an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will*

2. **Exodus 14:17-18 (LSB):** *“As for Me, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians with strength so that they will go in after them; and I will be glorified through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. 18 Then the Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh, when I am glorified through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen.”*

IV. **“He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.”**

A. Because God’s will is to glorify Himself, His purpose is to achieve it, and His decrees guarantee it. Therefore, God not only knows the future but has determined the future.

1. **Isaiah 46:10-11 (LSB):** *Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My counsel will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure', 11 Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My counsel from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have formed it, surely I will do it.*

a) Everything that happens in God's universe is being superintended by God Himself. He is the Sovereign ruler and sustainer.

(1) **Genesis 50:18-20 (LSB):** *Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your slaves." 19 But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? 20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to do what has happened on this day, to keep many people alive.*

B. Nothing can change God's eternal decrees, plan, or will. They are forever fixed because God is unchanging (see *Question & Answer 7*).

## V. Application

A. God can never do anything that is contrary to His will or Himself. Because God is holy, His glory is the greatest end; therefore, it is only good and right for God to seek His own glory. This means that we, as creatures of this holy God, are also to be oriented around His glory and always seeking to magnify it.

1. The Westminster Shorter Catechism **Question 1.** *"What is the chief end of man?"*

**Answer.** *"Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever."*

B. We can rest in the sovereignty of God, knowing that nothing will thwart His plan. Every good and bad thing that comes to pass is all working together for His glory and for the good of His people.

1. **Romans 8:28-30 (LSB):** *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. 29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers; 30 and those whom He predestined, He also called; and those whom He called, He also justified; and those whom He justified, He also glorified.*

a) God's glorious end is the Church's glorious end. Because of our union with Christ, we are not only made partakers of God's righteousness, but we are made to be partakers in His glory.

(1) **1 Peter 5:1 (LSB):** *Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed*

C. Because of God's good, perfect, and unchanging will, purpose, and decree(s), we can always rest knowing that what He has promised will come to pass. There is nothing anyone can do, whether demonic forces or human efforts, to stop God's will: "*No one can hold back His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'*" (Dan. 4:35)

D. Reflection Questions

1. **Question 1.** "*Are you concerned more with your glory or God's glory?*"
2. **Question 2.** "*Do you pray for God to guide and protect your steps?*"
3. **Question 3.** "*Are you trusting in the sovereignty of God in your life?*"

VI. Repeat / Sing Question & Answer 6 – 10

A. **Question 6.** *What things are chiefly contained in the Holy Scriptures?*

1. **Answer.** *The Holy Scriptures chiefly contain what man ought to believe, concerning God and what duty God requireth of man.*

B. **Question 7.** *What is God?*

1. **Answer.** *God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.*

C. **Question 8.** *Are there more gods than one?*

1. **Answer.** *There is but one only, the living and true God.*

D. **Question 9.** *How many persons are there in the Godhead?*

1. **Answer.** *There are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one God, the same in essence, equal in power and glory.*

E. **Question 10.** *What are the decrees of God?*

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