**SHARPENING YOUR SWORD**

**THE DOCTRINE OF GOD’S DECREE/PLAN**

Session 12 — April 12, 2023

This week we are taking 3 topics which could each take weeks of our study to go over thoroughly. But this is an overview of the elements of Systematic Theology and therefore we will only be scratching the surface of these weighty, yet important doctrines. The 3 sections are as follows:

1. The Decree/Plan of God
2. The Origin of Evil
3. The Providence of God

**OBJECTIVES FOR THIS SESSION**

1) To gain a basic grasp and be able to describe the biblical teaching on the Decree/Plan of God.

2) To look at the origin of evil and how it can exist with an all-powerful and all-good God.

3) To be able to articulate the biblical doctrine of the Providence of God and how it is related to the preservation and furtherance of God’s Decree/plan.

**KEY VERSE TO MEMORIZE**

“*Also, we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will…”*

Ephesians 1:11, NASB

1. **THE DECREE OF GOD – HIS ETERNAL PLAN**

God has a plan for this universe and all the creatures within it. This plan begins in the infinite past (eternity past) and continues into the infinite future (eternity future). This is a comprehensive and complete plan, designed to bring glory to God. …This plan is referred to by theologians as *“God’s Decree.”*

1. Read the following verses and identify what they say about God’s Decree:

Psalm 2:7

Psalm 148:6

Jeremiah 5:22

Isaiah 14:27

Daniel 4:24

1. What does Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 intimate about God’s Decree?
2. What do the following verses teach about the Decree of God?

Compare Isaiah 7:14 with Matthew 1:22

Compare Micah 5:2 with Matthew 2:5-6

Luke 22:22

Acts 2:23

Acts 17:26

1. How might we interpret the life experiences of Moses, Job, and Joseph with reference to the Decrees of God and His sovereign governing *“everything that would take place time?”*  Identify the natural calamity (nature) and moral calamity (personal suffering) in your examples.

1. Look at Acts 2:23 and Acts 4:27-28 and see how *ultimate* and *secondary* causes played a role in the crucifixion of Jesus.  How can you say God ultimately decreed the crucifixion but at the same time He is not directly responsible for what was done to His son?
2. What would you say is the ultimate cause behind a person’s salvation (Ephesians 1:4), yet identify a secondary cause that is more obvious to us as finite human beings (Acts 3:19 & 16:31)?
3. How can we reconcile Ephesians 1:4 with Romans 10:13? Does the *sovereignty* of God conflict with the human *responsibility* to repent and believe?
4. How can God make the following promises toward people which all require human responsibility in their response to His promises, and yet reconcile the fact that He is sovereign in salvation? Read about His promises here - Isaiah 1:18; 45:22; 55:1-3; Matt. 11:28-29; Jn. 6:35,37; Jn. 11:25-26; Jn. 3:16.
5. Read Job 38-41. Do you see God addressing Job’s suffering? If not, what does God stress in His answer to Job’s suffering? Why do you think He does that?
6. **THE PROBLEM OF EVIL – THE CREATION & FALL OF THE ANGELIC RACE**
7. Where did evil come from if God said in Genesis 1:31 that everything He had created was very good, yet in Genesis 3:1 He tells us about a serpent that is evil and tempts the first couple to sin?
8. In Isaiah 14:1-15 & Ezekiel 28:11-17, what is the source of the evil identified in those texts?
9. God could not have created anything with the perfection that He Is because that would mean He would no longer be supreme and perfect in Himself. Would this fact allow for the potential of evil coming from a creation that was less than perfect as God is perfect? Discuss this idea…
10. **THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD – HIS PRESERVATION, CONCURRENCE, & GOVERNANCE**

Hodge, a reformed theologian does a good job of explaining the doctrine of Providence.

“God’s works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions. Providence, therefore, includes preservation and government. By preservation is meant that all things out of God owe the continuance of their existence, with all their properties and powers, to the will of God.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. Why is Providence important to God’s Decree? Read Nehemiah 9:6 & Col 1:16-17.
2. Which of the following verses speak of God’s governance over nature and which speak of His governance over elements of human history?

Job 12:23

Job 9:5-9

Daniel 4:24-25

Matt. 6:25-30

Psa. 47:7-8

1. What does James 1:14 teach regarding God and sin?
2. What is God’s relation to sin as seen in the following verses?

Ps. 19:13

Ps. 81:12-13

Gen. 50:20

1. Charles Hodge, [*Systematic Theology*](https://ref.ly/logosres/hodge-st?ref=VolumePage.V+1%2c+p+575&off=40&ctx=%C2%A7+1.+Preservation%0a~God%E2%80%99s+works+of+provide), vol. 1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 575. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)