

Instruction In The Westminster Standards

The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations.

STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Q. 7. What are the decrees of God?

A. 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.

Scripture References: Eph. 1:4,11. Rom. 9:23. Acts 4:27,28. Ps. 33:11

Questions:

1. What is the nature of God's decrees?

God's decrees are unchangeable; they cannot be changed, therefore they are certain to be fulfilled. His decrees are eternal, being settled by God in eternity.

2. Are there more than one decree?

No, there is only one single decree. However, this decree includes many particulars and therefore we speak of it in the plural.

3. When one uses the word "decree" is it not usually synonymous with an arbitrariness?

When man uses the word such may be true but not when God uses it. God's decrees should not be classed in this way since they were framed by Him according to the counsel of his will. You must look behind the decree and see there the love of an infinite, personal God, whose all comprehensive plan is also all wise.

4. What is the purpose of God's decrees?

The purpose is His own glory first and through this, the good of the elect.

5. Who are the special objects of God's decrees and what is His decree toward them?

Angels and men are the special objects and His decree toward them is predestination.

6. What is meant by predestination?

Predestination is the plan or purpose of God respecting His moral creatures. It is divided into election and reprobation.

7. What is the definition of election and reprobation?

Election is God's eternal purpose to save some of the human race in and by Jesus Christ. Reprobation is God's eternal purpose to pass some men by with the operation of His special grace and to punish them for their sin.

8. If reprobation be true, how can God be just?

God would be just in condemning all to eternal punishment since all have sinned. He is in charge; He is the potter and our attitude should be one of thankfulness if we are of the elect by His grace. Man has no claim on God and God does not owe man eternal salvation or anything else.

LOOK TO THE THRONE OF GOD!

Very few today doubt that men are living in an age fraught with the feelings of frustration, failure, inadequacy, anxiety, fear and guilt. In an effort to hide such feelings men are pursuing a variety of temporary goals. For some, it is business success; some crave social life; some feel that drinking will solve the problem; and for some it is just the pride of life. But whatever the earthly goal, there is always a "tomorrow", when men wake up again to the knowledge that no method is lasting. No method provides enduring peace. To all men comes the challenge, "Look to the Throne of God!"

The study of this Catechism Question should enable any sinner saved by grace to see something of the nature of God on His throne, and should enable any man to recognize that his life is in the Hands of the Almighty, Sovereign God. So many times men forget. They forget that God who framed His decrees according to the counsel of His will, is our Heavenly Father who is personal and has infinite love for us, and that He can and does take care of the comparatively minor ills and problems of men.

In this troubled world of today there is a need that the God of eternal purpose, that God who has the world in His hands, be proclaimed by those who are His children by faith through Jesus Christ. But the difficulty today is that so many who proclaim Him as their Saviour, want to usurp so much of His efficacy. They desire the comfort and sustenance of the Sovereign God but want to exalt man and his powers and abilities even to the point of suggesting that man can work independently of God. Or, they seem to insert into the decree of God that He chooses certain men because He foresees certain capabilities of repentance and belief in them. Or even worse, they want to choose what to believe regarding predestination, often leaving out part of the teaching of the Word of God.

It is ever good for Christians to remember that He elected some men simply for reasons of His own and not because there was any deserving thing in them. Further, it is good for Christians to remember that they dare not meddle with the Word of God. True, there is much that finite minds can not understand. True, there is much against which our sinful minds rebel. But the Word stands in the midst of His eternal purpose. It is only as the Written Word is accepted as it is, as the Scriptures are proclaimed in all fulness, that the challenge can be issued to the world: "Look to the Throne of God!" for there sits the infinite, holy, sovereign God, the One who elects and keeps eternally.

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