

**The Shorter Catechism
of the Westminster Assembly
Explained and Proved
from Scripture
by
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VII. Ques. What are the decrees of God?

Ans. The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his own will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass.

Q. 1. What is it for God to decree?

A. For God to decree, is eternally to purpose and fore-ordain, to appoint and determine, what things shall be.

Q. 2. How did God decree things that come to pass?

A. God decreed all things according to the counsel of his will; according to his will, and therefore most freely-according to the counsel of his will, and therefore most wisely. "Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will."— Eph. 1:11.

Q. 3. Wherefore did God decree all things that come to pass?

A. God decreed all things for his own glory.

Q. 4. What sorts are there of God's decrees?

A. There are God's *general* decrees, and God's *special* decrees.

Q. 5. What are God's general decrees?

A. God's general decrees are his eternal purpose, whereby he hath fore-ordained whatever comes to pass; not only the being of all creatures which he doth make, but also all their motions and actions; not only

good actions, which he doth effect, but also the permission of all evil actions. "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."— Eph. 1:11. "Against thy holy child Jesus, Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."— Acts 4:27-28.

Q. 6. What are God's special decrees?

A. God's special decrees are his decrees of predestination of angels and men, especially his decrees of election. and reprobation of men.

Q. 7. What is God's decree of election of men?

A. God's decree of election of men, is his eternal and unchangeable purpose, whereby, out of his mere good pleasure, he hath in Christ chosen some men unto everlasting life and happiness, as the end, and unto faith and holiness, as the necessary means in order hereunto, for the praise of his most rich and free grace. "According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love, being predestinated according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace."— Eph. 1:6. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."— 2 Thess. 2:13.

Q. 8. What is God's decree of reprobation of men?

A. God's decree of reprobation, is his eternal purpose (according to his sovereignty, and the unsearchable counsel of his own will) of passing by all the rest of the children of men who are not elected, and leaving them to perish in their sins, unto the praise of the power of his wrath and infinite justice, in their everlasting punishment. "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?"— Rom 9:21-22.

Q. 9. Whence is it that God doth decree the election of some, and the reprobation of others, of the children of men?

A. It was neither the good works foreseen in the one which moved him to choose them, nor the evil works foreseen in the other which moved him to pass them by; but only because he would, he choose some, and because he would not, he did not choose the rest, but decreed to withhold that grace which he was nowise bound to give unto them, and to punish them justly for their sins, as he might have punished all, if he had so pleased. " The children being not yet born, neither having done good nor evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, Rot of works, but of him that calleth, it was said, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. For he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will, he hardeneth."— Rom. 9:11, 13, 19.

Q. 10. May any know whether they are elected or reprobated in this life?

A. 1. Those who are elected, may know their election by their effectual calling. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure."— 2 Pet. 1:10. But, 2. None can know certainly in this life (except such as have sinned against the Holy Ghost) that they are reprobated, because the greatest sinners (except such as have committed that sin) may be called. "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves," & c., "shall inherit the kingdom of God: and such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."— 1 Cor. 6:9-11. And we read of some called at the eleventh hour.— Matt. 20:6-7.