

Ephesians- Lesson Four

Westminster Shorter Catechism Q7. *What are the decrees of God?*

A. The decrees of God are His eternal plan based on the purpose of His will, by which, for His own glory, He has foreordained everything that happens.

Summary of Vs 3-14: A doxology of praise in three sections related to the persons of the Trinity for the blessings of God. Each section ends with “to the praise of His glory” (6, 12, 14). Blessings are spiritual- but that doesn’t mean they are immaterial. Spiritual is that which flows from God’s Spirit and is consistent with God’s purpose. All of life can be spiritual.

Structure of Vs 3-14:

Vs 3: Overview of blessing.

4-6: The Father who plans and determines blessings. Focus is on eternity past.

7-12: The Son who executes. How the blessings are provided, done in history.

13-14: The Holy Spirit who applies and seals/secures blessings. Focus on present and future.

11-14

In Him- One of the 11 references to “in Christ” in vs 3-14. Jesus is the instrument of blessings (they come from Him). He is the location of blessings (they are only received when we are in Christ).

We have obtained an inheritance- One single word in Greek. Inherit is to assign. Can be by lot. An inheritance is a gift based on personal connection, usually a family one (hence the adoption theme in this passage).

Obtained an inheritance can be understood as having entered the relationship that will bring that which is inherited ultimately- the fulfillment of all the blessings received only in part now. Like put in a will.

But it could also be that the believer is God’s inheritance/possession.

Deuteronomy 4:20 (ESV) But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own inheritance, as you are this day.

1 Peter 2:9 (ESV) But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Having been predestined- Pro-horizon. Means marked out beforehand.

According to the purpose of Him- Pro-place or stand.

Words like wisdom, plan, purpose are used 8 times in these verses. All God does is part of His purposeful plan. It is a blessing for us to know there is a wise and gracious plan and a blessing to know it in part.

God’s purpose and counsel show God’s acts are not based on man’s actions. Plan is from God.

God's plan is not even based on man's potential acts. God did not act because of what He foresaw but based on what he determined.

The Trinity is in view here with purpose, counsel, and will mentioned. Like- "let us make..."

Who works all things according to the counsel of his will- Work is the word energy. It is in the present tense and shows God is presently and consistently at work. God works in a wise way that is also mysterious (mystery means unfolding, vs 9).

Ephesians 3:20 (ESV) Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,

Why repeat similar phrases from a few verses earlier like predestination, counsel, will and purpose (vs 4-9)? The first section of the doxology focuses on God the Father and God's purpose as a wise plan that brings glory to Him. This section is the accomplishment of the plan and its personal application to those who are in Christ.

We who are the first to hope in Christ- Why is there now different terms of we and you (vs 13). Is this referring to Jews who believed the gospel first? Is it Paul and those who first shared the gospel at Ephesus? Most of the first believers were Jews and this cannot refer to Jews from before the time of Christ or the Jewish religion (even though God chose them both as a nation in a general sense and as individuals who were "true Israel"). The use of "we" can be a way to emphasize the point.

Might be to the praise of His glory- This ends the second section focusing on Jesus and the redemption he accomplished. Those who first believe as well as those believe later are to the praise of God's glory (they are all saved by the same Redeemer and by grace to inherit the same spiritual blessings). The same is true of those who come from a Jewish background or Gentile one.

In Him you also- Believers in Ephesus to whom Paul is writing. Everything said of them (hearing the gospel, sealed, etc.) is true of those who "first believed."

Heard the word of truth/ the gospel of your salvation- Similar meaning, the word of truth is the good news of God's salvation. Gospel means literally good news. It is the message of redemption in Christ.

Believed- Right response to election and purpose of God.

Sealed- Confirmation of authenticity/ownership. Seal of ring on a letter shows who it is from. Seal on livestock.

Sign of protection and security. Sealed/locked up like tomb of Jesus.

Sign of authority- only one with greater power can break or undo a seal.

With the Promised Holy Spirit- John 16:7-15; Acts 1:4. The Spirit is the agent who seals us in Christ.

Guarantee of our inheritance- Pledge. Literally a deposit or down payment. A common term in business transactions. The Spirit is the downpayment of all the blessings we have in Christ. 2 Corinthians 1:22- and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Obtain possession of it- Lit. the redemption of the possession. Length of time. There will be a day when we are fully redeemed and have the fullness of the blessings described by Paul. Romans 8:22-24.