



Joe Griffin

*The
Divine
Decree*

Edited by
John Cameron Smith

The Divine Decree

Let all of creation praise the name of the Lord,
for He commanded and they were created.
He has also established them forever and ever;
He has made a DECREE which will not pass
away. (Ps. 148:5-6 EXT)

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Joe Griffin Media Ministries

St. Charles, Missouri

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This book is edited from the lectures
and unpublished notes of Joe Griffin.

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JESUS CHRIST, LORD & SAVIOR

In the beginning [*before time began*] **was the Word** [*pre-existent Christ*], **and the Word was with God** [*Father*], **and the Word was God** **All things came into being** [*were created by*] **Him** [*Christ*] **In Him was** [*eternal*] **life, and the life was the Light of men, shining in the darkness** [*unbelief in Christ*], **and the darkness did not overcome the light.** (*John 1:1-5*)

FROM THE PASTOR

Utilizing the impeccable attributes of His essence, God's Divine Decree expresses the...

Self-governing decisions of His divine will (*sovereignty*) **and mentality** (*omniscience*) **by which all things¹ are brought into being** (*created*) **and controlled** (*managed*), **made subject to His pleasure, and producing His glorification** (*Isa. 46:10; Eph. 1:9*).²

Using His omniscience to comprehend all things in eternity past, the Divine Decree determines, before their occurrence, that which will become actual future events and the precise order and manner of their existence.

Using His sovereignty, God's Will is revealed in His decisions to allow certain things to occur and others not to occur. Many decisions occur from free-will decisions by angels and human beings contrary to God's desires. However, He allows these decisions to preserve their free-will attribute. Key Principle: **In human history, the sovereignty of God and the free will of man coexist by the Divine Decree.**

Joe Griffin
St. Charles, Missouri
November 2018

¹ **All of God's creation**, including all thoughts, decisions, and actions of angels and human beings throughout history.

² Adapted from R.B. Thieme, Jr., ***The Integrity of God***, 4th ed. (R.B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2005), pages 298–299.

PREFACE

If you are a believer in the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, then before beginning your Bible study you must name your sins directly to God the Father.

If believers confess their known sins to the Father, He is faithful and righteous to forgive their sins and to cleanse them from all wrongdoing, including unknown or forgotten sins. (1 John 1:9)

Thus, you will be filled with God the Holy Spirit in fellowship with God the Father, and spiritually prepared to learn and apply Bible doctrine.

God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in the filling of the Spirit and biblical truth. (John 4:24)

If you have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, then the issue is not your naming of sins. The issue is faith alone in Christ alone.

He who believes in Christ has eternal life; but he who does not obey the command to believe in Jesus Christ shall not see eternal life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (John 3:36)

INTRODUCTION

Sovereignty & Free Will

Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that have not been done, saying, My purpose [*Divine Decree*] will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure. (Isa. 46:10)

There is nothing hidden from God; His omniscience knew all about us before He created the human race. God's sovereignty acted to ensure the completion of His divine objectives. Every aspect of His creation is known by God and its existence is managed in His Decree.

In Matthew 10, the Lord commands His disciples not to fear:

- **"There is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known" (vs. 26).**
- **"Not one of the sparrows will fall to the ground apart from your Father" (v. 29).**
- **"The very hairs of your head are all numbered" (v. 30).**

Another example from the Divine Decree was His foreknowledge of Jeremiah and his appointment as a prophet.

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you [*special service*]; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations. (Jer. 1:5)

God's omniscience discerned all thoughts, decisions, and actions that would occur in Jeremiah's life, and concluded that his attributes qualified him as a prophet. All individuals were as exactly known by God in eternity past as was Jeremiah.

The depths of God's knowledge of all the events of human life is beyond our ability to comprehend. However, our understanding of His omniscience enables us to better evaluate why certain events occur. The principle that explains the relationship between the Decree of God and the life of an individual may be stated as:

In human history, sovereignty of God and free will of man coexist by Divine Decree.

God's Inherent Essence

God's inherent attributes explaining His perfect essence are understood as related to His Decree.

Sovereignty

God's unlimited authority, essential to an accurate interpretation of His Decree, is expressed by His perfect, eternal, and irreversible Will and purpose throughout the universe. Each of the countless number of decisions by God is perfect and irreversible since His perfect integrity is incapable of an incorrect decision.

The more we comply with His decisions revealed in the Bible, the more divine blessings we receive. However, failure to abide by His Will results in self-induced misery and divine discipline.

Righteousness

God's righteousness includes divine principles of integrity revealing absolute truth and impeccable standards. His righteousness requires obedience to His perfect standards while disobedience is condemned. Thus, what righteousness demands, justice executes with blessing or discipline.

Divine righteousness is imputed by God to every person who believes by faith alone in Christ alone, resulting in both salvation and eternal life.

Justice

God's justice reflects His fairness and impartiality and, following the disobedience of Adam, became mankind's point of reference with God's essence. Whatever righteousness approves, justice blesses, and whatever righteousness rejects, justice disciplines. Righteousness is the principle of God's integrity while justice is its function.

Love

The Apostle John defines God's perfect love as "**God is love**" (1 John 4:8,16), using the Greek word ἀγάπη (*agápē*) to convey the fact that love is intrinsically part of His essence. God's love is His innate quality of absolute benevolence that does not require self-induced motivation. Love is never emotional but always logical. Since God's attributes are immutable, His perfect love is forever unfailing and unchanging. An attribute of God's love combines with His righteousness and justice to define His integrity.

Divine love is personal when it is directed toward the perfection of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. When directed toward His own perfection, love is expressed as divine self-esteem.

Love is unconditional (impersonal) when directed toward the imperfection of human beings who are born spiritually dead. The unconditional love of God was expressed by His grace provision of Jesus Christ in order to resolve the human sin problem.

Integrity

God's integrity, comprised of His righteousness, justice, and omniscience, functions under His policy of grace. Righteousness speaks of the perfection of His standards that can never be compromised. God's integrity condemns sin and cannot accept or interact with any form of imperfection. Divine righteousness demands obedience; and whatever righteousness demands, divine justice must execute.

Omniscience

God's omniscience knows perfectly, eternally, and simultaneously all that is knowable, both actual and potential. He knows all things past, present, and future; to Him the future is as perspicuous as the past. Since God's knowledge is unlimited, everything is completely comprehensible to Him. Prior to the creation of angels, the universe, or human beings, God knew all thoughts, decisions, and actions of His creatures simultaneously without interfering with the exercise of their volition.

Immutability

God is unchangeable. His innate attributes are in a stable state of perfection, eternally unalterable and unfailing. Without assistance, God's *omnipotence* empowers Him to manage His creation and creatures. His *omnipresence* indicates that He is always aware of everything instantaneously. His *veracity* ensures that His thoughts, decisions, and actions define and reveal absolute truth.

Summary

In conclusion, God perceives real from potential, truth from lie, good from evil, righteous from unjust, noble from ignoble, and right from wrong. Since God knows all that is knowable, He identifies the decisions of all individuals in human history and determines the exact manner in which He will use our decisions for His own glorification: **"My purpose [*Divine Decree*] will be established, and I will accomplish My good pleasure"** (*Isa. 46:10c*).

Thus, mankind lives within a divinely structured system wherein obedience to God's Word results in blessing and reward, whereas disobedience results in discipline and penalty. Attainment of spiritual maturity by the believer provides the capacity to fully benefit from God's blessings.

The overruling doctrine that explains this system is God's Divine Decree, defined as follows:

God's Decree is His eternal [*forever existing*], holy [*perfect integrity*], wise [*omniscience applied to His created beings*], and sovereign

purpose, comprehending simultaneously all things that ever were or will be in their causes [*thoughts, decisions, and actions*], conditions [*positive or negative*], successions [*subsequent causes and effects*], and relations [*cumulative impact*] and determining [*controlling or managing*] their certain futurity.¹

God's perfect attributes of essence contribute to His Will and purpose for both angelic and human history. God's omniscience, the source of His Decree, comprehended in eternity past all that is knowable completely and simultaneously. His impeccable divine Will identified those thoughts, decisions, and actions of human beings that would occur in the future and the precise circumstances of their occurrence.

God knew every circumstance the believer would confront and graciously provided in eternity past the solutions to each such circumstance.

There is no problem for you that is not also experienced by others. God is faithful and will not allow you to suffer beyond what you can tolerate (*1 Cor. 10:13*).

It is important to note that those faithful believers who advance to the "*higher ground*" of spiritual maturity will receive special blessings from God.

¹ This definition and related commentary in the following pages are adapted from R.B. Thieme, Jr., *The Integrity of God*, 4th ed. (Houston: R.B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2005), pages 297ff.

All acts of human free will were known to God in eternity past. The decisions human beings make are irreversible because God's omniscience is able to observe and record all of our choices. Robert Frost's poem serves to amplify this concept.

***The Road Not Taken*²**

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;
Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,
And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.
I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
I took the one less traveled by
And that has made all the difference*

² Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken," in ***Adventures in American Literature***, Edmund Fuller and B. Jo Kinnick (Chicago: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1951, 1963), page 252.

DIVINE DECREE COMPUTER

The Will of God and His plan and purpose for human history is revealed in the Divine Decree, expressing what God expects of His creatures and perceives what events would actually occur and those that would not. His omniscience discerns all thoughts, decisions, and actions occurring throughout history and their exact order and manner of occurrence.

Since the primary issue in the Angelic Conflict³ is man's free will, many events occur that conflict with God's Will for His human creation. However, accepting human free will, God's Decree allows man's thoughts, decisions, and actions to occur independently — ***God's sovereignty and man's free will must coexist by Divine Decree.***

All human beings conceived by the volitional decisions of parents are included in the Decree. God foreknew, although did not cause, all of these unions and chose to select some of the offspring and not to select others. Selection refers to God's imputation of soul life to biological life at physical birth resulting in human life. ***Principle: human free will creates biological life while God decrees human life by imputing soul life at birth.***

Selection also indicates that God decrees a value and purpose for all the newly born regardless of

³ ***Invisible conflict between God and Satan*** in which human free will plays an essential role in deciding Satan's ultimate future – Refer to Appendix A, pages 48-49.

of the conditions of birth. Although the selected individual is born physically alive, he is spiritually dead and in need of the Savior. Free will allows the individual the option of believing or not in Jesus Christ for salvation and eternal life.

In eternity past, God foreknew the decisions that would create biological life and His sovereign decision to select those for human life. He also foreknew every free-will thought, decision, and action that would occur for each individual during his life. These thoughts create a cause that has an effect; and each effect becomes a succeeding cause, and so forth throughout history.

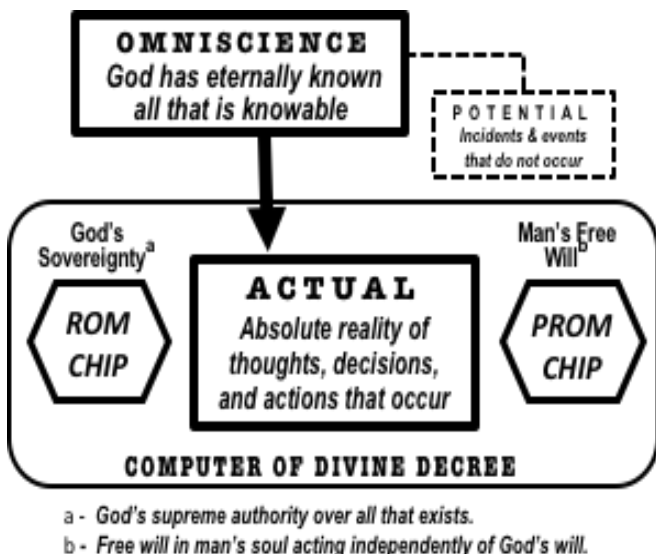
In review, the definition of God's Divine Decree may be defined as follows:

God's Divine Decree is His eternal, holy, wise, and sovereign authority and purpose, understanding simultaneously all things that ever existed or will exist in their causes, conditions, successions, relations and determining their certain futurition.

- causes: thoughts, decisions, and actions
- conditions: positive or negative; right or wrong; divine good or human good
- successions: ensuing causes and effects
- relations: increasing effect of the first cause

All free-will decisions may either glorify God or not with either positive or negative effects. The effects on others are recognized by God and these interpersonal interactions are observed and included in the Decree by Him.

Imagine the Divine Decree as depicted by a huge computer programmed by God's omniscience of all human decisions throughout history.



God's innate attribute of omniscience foreknew all thoughts, decisions, and actions with their related effects and entered them into this huge computer. God identified all sinful and righteous actions by believers during their lives and knew what would have occurred had the decisions resulting in those actions been different. Imagine the effects of different choices regarding your marriage: who would have been your children from a different spouse, and what would have been the effect on future generations of your descendants?

What would have occurred in your life had you rejected the Gospel; chosen a different profession or career, or selected a different community? The omniscience of God knows the actual from the potential, but only the actual is programmed into the computer of the Divine Decree.

Knowing the choices made by each believer, God programmed His own decisions into the computer: for example, logistical grace support for all believers and special blessings for spiritually mature believers who continue to grow **“in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”** (2 Pet. 3:18).

By programing His responses to human decisions, a *principle* is revealed applicable to believers:

Good decisions expand future options resulting in spiritual prosperity, while bad decisions limit future options resulting in divine discipline (see Heb. 12:5–6).

Divine and human participation in encoding their decisions into the Divine Decree computer may be understood from two perspectives:

Efficacious: that which is directly created and inserted by God based on His sovereignty.

Permissive: that which is allowed by God regarding actions by either secondary causes or by the free will of mankind.

Data are retained in the computer on two chips: ROM (*Read-Only Memory*) contains God’s efficacious decisions and PROM (*Programmable Read-Only Memory*) contains God’s permissive Will by allowing human choices.

ROM chip is an integrated circuit into which unchangeable data can be read, but no new data can be entered, thus revealing God's sovereign Will.

PROM chip is an integrated circuit with readable but unalterable data, disclosing the thoughts, decisions, and actions of all humans entered into the computer.

Knowing in advance all of the adversities that will be confronted in life by the believer (including problems, tests, trials, disasters, and failures), God provided solutions in the ROM chip for all of them.

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. There is no problem for you that is not also experienced by others; God is faithful and will not allow you to suffer beyond what you can bear, and He will provide a way of escape in order that you will be able to endure and survive the difficulty.

(1 Cor. 10:12-13 EXT)

All solutions are contained in the sovereignty of God's chip including its printouts that are referred to as the Word of God, Mind of Christ, or simply the Bible. The believer is mandated to study, learn, retain, and apply this divine grace support in the resolution of all difficulties in life:

Christ's grace is sufficient for you [the believer], for His divine power is made perfect in your weakness [caused by an inherited sinful nature and its lust patterns].

(2 Cor. 12:9 EXT)

DIVINE KNOWLEDGE

God's knowledge may be explained as consisting of self-knowledge, omniscience, and foreknowledge.

Self-Knowledge

Each member of the Trinity has total and complete knowledge of each other. They are aware of the innate attributes creating their perfect character.

Omniscience

God knows all that is knowable about angelic and human history, the past, present, and future. This knowledge includes all events concerning the lives of believers and unbelievers, both the reality of what occurs and the potentiality of what is possible but does not occur.

He knows all the circumstances requiring free-will decisions. He knows the outcome of each decision from its source to interactions with other people and events. God's divine responses to these human decisions are programmed into the ROM chip.

But, He only recognizes actual decisions that occur, and are programmed into the PROM chip of the computer. Those decisions that do not occur are also known to Him but are not recognized as reality, and thus, not entered into the computer.

Foreknowledge

Foreknowledge is a printout from the computer recognizing what is in the Divine Decree for only believers. *God's foreknowledge makes nothing certain; it merely acknowledges what is certain.*

Thus, nothing can be foreknown until it is first decreed. God foreknows all events as future because He has decreed them as certainly future.

The sequence of events involved in programming the Divine Decree began in eternity past with God's omniscience looking forward into the totality of the future and observing all the decisions and actions of human history. This enabled God to observe the thoughts, decisions, and actions of all believers and to separate actual events from potential events that could have but did not occur. Potential choices are ignored while actual occurrences are programmed into the computer on the PROM chip.

Responding to this recorded data, the sovereignty of God decrees appropriate responses to the free-will decisions of man. His provisions that sustain believers consistent with His divine plan include logistical grace support, protection, blessings and rewards, as well as punishment and discipline.

What omniscience discerns as reality is entered into the Decree as a record of future decisions made by believers. God's foreknowledge merely recognizes what His omniscience decreed; in other words, it only expresses what is in the Decree.

Illustrating this principle, imagine that you were unable to view a live baseball game and recorded the action on your television. Later you watched the game with a friend who had attended the game previously, allowing him to know what actually took place before it occurred on replay, recount

some of the major plays, relate how the teams were able to score, and announce the final score. This illustration provides an understanding of how omniscience programs the computer with actual as contrasted with potential events.

God's omniscience is not restricted by the measure of time as is true for human beings, but is able to observe the totality of human history even before man was created. Hence, He did not influence or interfere with human free will; rather, His omniscience recognized human free will by entering what would actually occur into the Decree.

Foreknowledge is a printout of what the believer decides to do during his lifetime — every thought, decision, and action — but it is the Decree that establishes the future reality of these events. The Decree was programmed in eternity past, but the decisions in the Decree occur in time. Hence, the attribute of omniscience permits God to evaluate decisions in advance and respond to the benefit of mankind in harmony with His divine plan.

For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts higher than your thoughts. My Word will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the manner in which I sent it.

(Isa. 55:8-11)

OMNISCIENCE & FREE WILL

Omniscience is God's all-knowing intelligence that comprehends all that is knowable regarding every person who lived or will live throughout history.

God's knowledge is eternal and superior to human intelligence. God knows perfectly, eternally, and simultaneously all that is knowable, both actual and potential. His knowledge is never corrupted by ignorance, irrationality, or emotionality. It is and persists as absolute, unchangeable truth.

His perfect omniscience knows all that would have occurred with different decisions. However, His omniscience informs Him of what actually occurs in human history caused by human volition. Perceiving what will occur does not in any way suggest divine interference with or control of human free will. The following principle explains the freedom of human volition:

Omniscience perceives the free as free,¹ the necessary as necessary,² together with all their causes, conditions, successions, and relations, as one indivisible system of things,³ every link of which is essential to the integrity of the whole.⁴

1—human volition

2—divine justice and integrity

3—man freely thinks, decides, and acts

4—volition determines historical trends

The free will of God and mankind coexist. The decisions of each are encoded into the computer of the Divine Decree in the ROM and PROM chips.

God's absolute, unalterable standards define His righteousness, and establish the perfection of His thoughts. Although man is free to pursue his own choices, God's omniscience judges those choices as to their compliance with His perfect standards.

His attributes of righteousness and justice operate in tandem. What righteousness demands, justice must execute. Righteousness rejects sin, and justice must condemn sin. What righteousness approves, justice must honor; and when righteousness disapproves, justice must judge.

The grace of God provided a solution to man's sin problem with the substitutionary spiritual death of Jesus Christ on the cross. The righteousness of God approved of Christ as the qualified Substitute and justice honored that grace provision.

Righteousness rejected the sins of the human race and divine justice condemned them. At the cross, righteousness demanded that the sins of mankind be transferred from the human race and imputed to the innocent Christ and justice complied. Once accomplished, righteousness demanded that these sins be judged and justice judged them. These divine decisions and actions removed sin as an issue thus permitting the human race to receive God's righteousness by faith alone in Christ alone.

At salvation, God's righteousness is imputed to the believer enabling a spiritual rebirth and a direct relationship with God. Although sins were judged at the cross, they remain an issue in the Angelic Conflict since the sinful nature remains active in the human body. Accordingly, God graciously provided a solution for believers to account for these sins by means of confessional prayer:

If believers claim to be without sin, they deceive themselves ... If we confess our known sins to God, He is faithful and just and will forgive us of our sins and cleanse us from all wrongdoing, including unknown and forgotten sins. (1 John 1:8-9 EXT)

When sins are confessed, the believer is restored to fellowship with God the Holy Spirit whereby he is enabled to grow in grace, produce divine good, and benefit from God's personalized plan for his life as revealed in Scripture. God's grace provision of Bible doctrine must be the focus of our efforts to grow spiritually and restrain the evil influence of Satan and the sinful nature's lust patterns.

The ROM chip contains God's sovereign policies, standards, and decisions of how He chooses to manage the decisions of human free will. God's sovereignty, found in the ROM chip, and man's free will, found in the PROM chip, will continue to coexist throughout human history from the source of the Decree.

God created the human race to resolve the Angelic Conflict. But, if He allowed man to function with free will without His prior knowledge of the after-effects, it would not be possible for Him to manage human history consistent with His plan. However, God's essence includes omniscience to which He referred when He spoke to Jeremiah, **"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you (Jer. 1:5)."**

Thus, man's free will has been and shall remain entirely independent. God's sovereignty has been and shall continue to respond to those decisions within the context of His integrity. Divine integrity consists of God's composites of righteousness, justice, and omniscience as expressed through His policy of divinely directed blessings from His grace. His attribute of righteousness represents the perfect standards of divine integrity. Justice administers what His perfect righteous, impartial standards demand. Grace is all that God is free to do for the benefit of mankind as a result of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. God's complete knowledge of all the facts associated with human free will is provided by His omniscience and is unalterably retained in the Divine Decree.

God's love motivates all of His interrelationships with the human race, including His enforcement of righteous standards with which we must comply. Thus, God's integrity interacts with mankind by the synchronized functions of His righteousness (*condemns or approves*), His justice (*judges or blesses*), and His love (*motivates His grace*).

INTEGRITY & FREE WILL

As expressed in His Divine Decree, the sovereignty of God is His absolute authority and rulership over all that exists in the universe. God's plan conceived the creation of the human race, endowed with free will, who would function as free agents even though their decisions would be judged by His integrity. For these agents, God's Decree provides the following:

- (1) Agents shall be free to determine and held accountable for their own decisions.
- (2) Decisions are causes that result in effects, effects become causes, and so forth. God does not cause these decisions; an agent's free will creates all actions and their results.
- (3) All present conditions of human decisions shall be as occurred — God will not change or replace those decisions in any way.
- (4) Agent's decisions shall be spontaneous and freely made, without divine intervention.
- (5) All decisions will be interpreted as real occurrences and recorded in the PROM chip.

The Decree's objective is both *preservation* and *deliverance of believers*, as well as the *glorification of God* by the imputation of blessings to believers. God manages all human events in order to fulfill His own purpose and eternal pleasure.

Therefore, preservation continues the existence of all things, but God's Will directs their progress, which may be defined as follows:

Directive: God has a plan for our lives. Man has free will to accept God's direction wherein life is bestowed with importance and purpose.

Determinative: Man's volition is allowed to create conditions of blessing or cursing. God never interferes with the exercise of free will.

Permissive: Negative volition to God's Word is permitted by divine justice, but the result is divine discipline for believers in time.

Preventative: God provides Bible doctrine, laws of divine establishment, problem-solving strategies, royal Family Honor Code,⁴ and divine discipline to motivate human volition to remain in compliance with God's plan.

Overruling: Contingent on the maturity of believers, God will intervene to save a nation, area, business, organization, church, or home.

God's omniscience knew the thoughts, decisions, and actions directing one believer to spiritual maturity and another into reversionism.⁵ With this understanding, God decreed that human history include His blessings for spirituality but also suffering and discipline for reversionism.

⁴ The **Honor Code** defines the spiritual life and service of advancing believers as members of God's royal family (*Rom. 12:1-21*).

⁵ **Reversionism** is rejection of God's Will and purpose for his life resulting from becoming corrupted by Satan's evil system (*1 Tim. 4:1*).

Thus, God's integrity plays an active role in human history by imputing His responses to human free-will choices into the computer's ROM chip. Our existence results from a divine choice at the moment of physical birth; however, our choices in life are not coerced, restricted, or altered by God.

There are over seven billion people on this earth and each one was selected by God. All are in the Decree by God's sovereign Will, functioning under the aegis of His integrity and kept alive by His grace. All have free will and enjoy the option of salvation through faith alone in Christ alone.

The largest "religious" association, with almost 2 billion members, is identified as Christian, but the diversity of ill-defined Gospel messages causes that number to be suspect. Of that number, there is justifiable doubt concerning how many are believers spiritually advanced in their Christian way of life.

Second largest are the 1.3 billion Muslims, fanatical followers of the Qur'an and its prophet Muhammad. They are committed to conquering the West even without the use of terrorism. Algeria's President Houari Boumédiène said, "*We will conquer you through the wombs of our women.*" British activist Anjem Choudary said, "*We do not integrate into Christianity. We will ensure that one day you will integrate into the Sharia Islamic law.*"⁶

⁶ "Jihadist preacher Anjem Choudary," *Jihad Watch*

The next three of the top five are Hinduism (900 million), Buddhism (360 million), and Sikhism (23 million). All of these, plus heathen belief-systems including atheists, add up to another 3 billion. The source consulted for these numbers provides an approximate total of over 7 billion comprising the current world population.

Of the seven billion people, only 360 million are Protestants, which leads to the following conclusions:

- (1) Among the world's "religions," only a minority of the population elected to believe in the grace gift of Jesus Christ's salvation and eternal life and an even smaller number choose to commit to advance spiritually in God's grace plan.
- (2) Thus, the size of the pivot necessary to sustain a Client Nation⁷ is not as large as might be suspected.

Of the groups comprising Christianity, God knew all would not be saved and only a minority would choose to believe and/or advance spiritually. This information is in the Decree and God knows each believer by name. Yet, the Angelic Conflict between God and Satan involving the human race is allowed to continue until the Church age is terminated by the Rapture ("Resurrection") of the Church at an unknown future time.⁸

⁷ See Griffin, *Gospel's Missionary Journey* (2017), page 20-21.

⁸ See Appendix B, *Divine Timeline of Human History*, page 50.

Meanwhile, God allows “**the heathen to rage, and the people to imagine a vain thing.**”⁹

*It is plain from the testimony of Scripture that God is permitting Satan’s career and program of pride and rebellion to run its course, both as it affects man and the earth and the angelic beings, in order to bring glory to Himself in His redemptive grace in Christ and to furnish a stern lesson for eternity, to all created intelligences, of the wicked folly of revolt against their Creator (Ref. Matt. 25:41; Rev. 19:20).*¹⁰

God’s **Decree** and His **desire** do not necessarily agree. Sin, human viewpoint, human good, and evil are not among His desires, but since the fall of Adam man has been guilty of these violations. Yet, the Lord “**is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance** (2 Pet. 3:9).”

In His magnificent grace, the Lord does not desire for any soul to be cast into the Lake of Fire,¹¹ but divine righteousness demands that those who do not believe in Jesus Christ as the Savior must face divine judgment (Rev. 20:11–15) — what God’s righteousness rejects, His justice must judge (Rom. 5:12).

⁹ Psalm 2:1; Acts 4:25 (KJV).

¹⁰ Merrill F. Unger, **Biblical Demonology: A Study of the Spiritual Forces behind the Present World Unrest** (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1952), page 189.

¹¹ Lake of Fire is the **eternal residence for unbelievers, Satan, and his fallen angels** wherein they live in misery and forever alienated from God (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:11–15).

BOOK OF LIFE

**Complete Census
of Human Race in
the Book of Life**



SELECTION
Rev. 20:12b

**Unbelievers'
Names Removed
at Physical Death**



REJECTION
Rev. 20:15

**Eternal Registry
of Believers in
the Book of Life**



PERFECTION
Rev. 3:5

Throughout human history, how many billions of people had their names removed from the *Book of Life* at the moment of physical death? Regardless of the number, none of these rejections of Christ was the desire of God — **“God wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth”** (1Tim. 2:4 NET). The Divine Decree includes the Will and desire of God, even though it may disagree with the free-will of the human race.

All sins violate God’s Will for believers; every act of human good and evil is in opposition to His divine purpose for their lives. These violations are managed in the Decree so believers are in error when they intentionally or unknowingly engage in disobedience to the perfect righteousness of God’s Word. Yet in His grace, confession to God of known sins reinstates the believer in His plan in fellowship with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18b).

POWER OF PRAYER

Prayer is the divinely ordained method of direct and private communication between God the Father and the individual believer. Thus, prayer is the unique prerogative of the royal priesthood of believers in the Church Age (*1 Pet. 2:9*) and permits believers to approach God with intercessions for others and petitions for themselves. The believer is mandated to “**pray continually**” (*1 Thess. 5:17*) but only as first enabled by the confession of known sins to the Father (*Eph. 5:18*).¹²

God hears and processes all Spirit-filled prayers, but His response is based on His plan and purpose for the individual as well as for others to whom the prayer is directed. The more doctrine learned and applied the more successful is his prayer and the greater the likelihood of the desired response. Therefore, the thought originating the prayer, the believer’s decision to express that thought, and its expression to God were recognized in eternity past and included in the PROM chip of the Divine Decree. The answer to that prayer was inserted into the ROM chip by God and will occur in human history at His designated time.

The prayer included in the PROM chip may not be processed by the ROM chip – for example, prayers

¹² See Griffin, *One Day at a Time* (2013), pages 131ff.

offered out of fellowship or by unbelievers are not recognized by God. Thoughts not prayed are not recorded in the PROM chip and, therefore, the ROM chip does not include a divine answer.

When a believer prays to the Father, he is typically addressing issues of concern for the immediate future. In the Angelic Conflict (*see Appendix A*), prayer often serves as the believer's artillery to confront situations he is unsure of how to manage.

The following passage from Acts 12 illustrates how the sovereignty of God and the free will of man coexist by Divine Decree. In these verses, we first discover how God's sovereignty is the foremost influence in human history, and secondly, we learn how the believer's prayer coordinates with God's sovereignty to fulfill His divine Will and purpose for the human race.

SOME DIE YOUNG, SOME DON'T

Acts 12 opens with the execution of the Apostle James by Herod Agrippa I (c. AD 44). Herod was the son of Aristobulus and Bernice, and grandson of Herod the Great.

Since Herod Agrippa had an affinity for Jews and the rituals of Judaism, he persuaded the Roman Emperor Claudius (c. AD 41–54) to allow him to rule the Jewish nation within the Roman Empire.

Herod also understood how to play Roman politics by supporting emperor worship and attending all the requisite festivals of Roman culture.

Herod's affinity for Judaism persuaded him to persecute the Christian church by imprisoning or killing Christians.

Now about that time [AD 44] Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the [Christian] church in order to mistreat them. And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. (Acts 12:1-2)¹³

James was not guilty of any crime except his belief in Jesus Christ. He was the son of Zebedee and the elder brother of the Apostle John. They created and managed a profitable fishing business on the Sea of Galilee.

James became a very devoted follower, disciple, and later an Apostle of Jesus. He and John were among the first four to respond to the appeal of Jesus Christ's statement, "**Follow Me** (Matt. 4:19)." James' execution by Herod made him the first Apostle to be martyred. His brother John was the last of the apostles to die.

In Acts 12, Luke provides a historical account of two men facing the specter of death. James was relocated from prison into the Praetorium where he was executed. Also, Herod imprisoned Peter and ordered him executed the next day.

¹³ "The constitutional mode of inflicting *capital punishment* on a Roman citizen was by the lector's axe. But the military mode of execution (was) decapitation by the sword" (W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), page 781.

Although James was martyred, Peter escaped with the assistance of an angel. These two events are recorded in the Divine Decree. Why was James's death permitted while Peter was allowed to live? Why did the sovereignty of God permit both to be imprisoned yet decreed the assistance of an angel for one but not for the other?

Peter lived into his late sixties while James died in his mid-forties. Peter will be guided to freedom but is never heard from again except for a brief appearance (*Acts 15:7-11*) and a reprimand by the Apostle Paul (*Gal. 2:11ff*).

The sovereignty of God arrived at these decisions in eternity past. A short study of James and Peter helps to clarify God's Will and purpose.

DEATH OF JAMES

The Apostle James was a well-known, well-liked, and honorable believer who was a leader in the Jerusalem church. However, he was murdered by Herod for reasons identified in Scripture.

First, the context of Acts chapter 12 emphasizes the power of prayer that apparently was not practiced with regularity by the Christian church in Jerusalem. The church will ultimately cease to exist, but its members – and future believers – will be provided an illustration of the power of prayer. To encourage believers in their loyalty to Christian doctrines, the Lord rewarded James with the honor of becoming the first apostolic martyr.

Second reason for James's death can be discerned from the writings of Eusebius (Greek historian):

Clement (c.150–c.215) adds an interesting tradition regarding James that the man who brought him into court was so moved by his testimony that he confessed that he too was a Christian: So they were both taken away together, and on the way he asked James to forgive him. James looked at him for a moment and replied, "Peace be with you," and kissed him. So both were beheaded at the same time.¹⁴

Thus, James' witness resulted in a Jew becoming a believer in Jesus Christ as his Messiah/Savior.

Herod's motivation to impress the Jewish leaders was a third reason for James' execution. James had matured into a devout believer and a very popular individual within the Christian community. Herod knew James' execution would earn him praise from the Jewish religious leadership.

God also permitted James' execution to increase the awareness of the reality of the Angelic Conflict (see Appendix A, page 48) and to motivate believers to recognize the necessity of intercessory prayer.

James was indeed influenced by his ambitious and arrogant mother who imagined prominent futures for her sons. James, along with his brother John

¹⁴ Paul L. Maier, *Eusebius: The Church History* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1999), pages 66–67.

and Peter, were with Christ when He revealed His **“Shekinah glory”¹⁵** in His ***Transfiguration***.

He [Christ] was transfigured [physically transformed into His body of glory] before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. (*Matt. 17:2*)

Impressed by her sons’ presence with Christ in His Transfiguration, the mother impulsively posed a question to the Lord:

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. And He said to her, “What do you wish?” She said to Him, “Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left.” But Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup [imputation of all human sins] that I am about to drink?” They [James & John] said to Him, “We are able.” And He said to them, “My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father. (*Matt. 20:20–23*)

James was a motivated believer; but, he was rebuked in the Lord’s response to his mother’s request and the over-zealous answer uttered by him and his brother. He came to realize that neither he nor his brother John was qualified to

¹⁵ Hebrew term describing the ***visible manifestation or physical appearance of the deity of Jesus Christ***.

drink the cup of the Lord on the cross. However, he did drink the cup of apostolic martyrdom.

God recognized these circumstances in eternity past and chose not to intervene but to allow the martyrdom of the Apostle James.

We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son. (*Rom. 8:28-29*)

The consequence of James's execution resulted in encouraging believers to appeal to God the Father using intercessory prayer when the Apostle Peter was challenged with similar circumstances.

ESCAPE OF PETER

When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he [*Herod*] proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the [*festival*] days of Unleavened Bread. (*Acts 12:3*)

Herod earnestly wanted to be accepted by the Jews. The Jewish pleasure with the execution of James encouraged Herod to arrest and execute Peter. However, his execution was delayed since the arrest occurred on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread that initiates the annual Passover celebration (*Ex. 12:1-30*).

Jewish law prohibited executions during the observance of their feast days, thereby postponing Peter's sentence for a week.

When he [Herod] had seized him [Peter], he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads [τετράδιον (tetrádion): Latin: “quaternion” (KJV): half a squad or four men, or total of 16] of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover [Πάσχα (páscha): “Easter” (KJV)] to bring him out before the people. (Acts 12:4)

Herod utilized extreme measures to ensure that Peter would be unable to escape his imprisonment during the week of Passover. Each *tetrádion* assumed three-hour shifts from six in the evening until six in the morning. Two guards were with him in his cell, two outside the cell, and four were stationed at two exits from the prison.

As soon as the feast days ended, Peter would be brought “**before the people,**” where the Jews would condemn him to death after Herod gave the order to authorize the sentence. It is reasonable to conclude that Peter could not possibly escape from all these constraints. However, something new was occurring within the Jerusalem church.

Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made [γίνομαι (gínomai)] fervently [ἐκτενῶς (ektenós)] by the [Jerusalem] church to God. (Acts 12:5)

This verse in Acts is a brief summary of the eight days of Passover: (1) Peter is imprisoned guarded by Roman soldiers while (2) members of the Jerusalem church are involved in fervent prayer.

Peter is in a helpless and hopeless situation, the very situation where God's magnificent grace is the only available problem-solving strategy.

The church had been neglecting prayer at a time when they knew Herod was their antagonist and the Jews were his favored comrades. Shocked by the suddenness of James's execution and the arrest of Peter, the church was moved to action.

The believer is commanded to **"pray continually"** (1 Thess. 5:17), but only as enabled by the filling ministry of God the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18b). Prevailing prayer as a spiritual weapon is intended by God to address issues as they occur.

The word **"fervently"** in Acts 12:5 is the adverb ἐκτενῶς (*ektenós*), which combines the ideas of perseverance – "without letting up" – and intensity – "with fervor, urgently."¹⁶ This word is used in conjunction with the present passive participle of the verb γίνομαι (*gínomai*), **"was being made."** The participle is a periphrastic imperfect and is decidedly durative in significance in its construction. Not only were Jerusalem believers praying intensely, but they were praying urgently over the course of the entire eight days. These efforts created an outcome that would astonish them when the last night of the Passover commemoration occurred.

¹⁶ Cleon L. Rogers, Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), page 257.

On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison. (Acts 12:6)

Peter was as constrained on the eighth night of his confinement as he was on the first: he remained in chains, confined to a cell, and guarded by Roman soldiers inside and out. When a believer is in a hopeless–helpless situation he is at the mercy of God’s grace. Such individuals are prime subjects for intercessory prayer to God the Father.

When James was taken prisoner, the church was inattentive while James was condemned to death. Now the church is awakened. They immediately perceived the danger Peter faced and discerned the evolving campaign against all of them. Herod’s anti-Christian zealotry evoked murder lust in him as Jewish religious leaders further encouraged him. This realization motivated the Christians to engage in constant prayer. With no means of rescuing Peter, these believers trusted ... **that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28).**

Thus, Peter faith-rested during his difficulties with Herod by claiming God’s promises, using doctrinal rationales, and reaching a doctrinal conclusion.¹⁷ As a result, Peter slept peacefully.

¹⁷ See App. C, page 51 and *One Day at a Time* (2013), pages 104ff.

Scriptures pertinent to the power of prayer:

[Christ]: If two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. (Matt. 18:19)

[Christ]: All things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive. (Matt. 21:22)

[David]: Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him; do not fear because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who carries out wicked schemes. (Ps. 37:7)

[Isaiah]: The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever, for in God the Lord, we have an everlasting Rock. (Isa. 26:3-4)

[Moses]: Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation [deliverance] of the Lord. (Ex. 14:13b)

[David]: For the battle [to overcome difficulty] is the Lord's. (1 Sam. 17:47)

[David]: In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell in safety. (Ps. 4:8)

Principle: God does not help those who help themselves. He helps the helpless. He does not do for Peter what Peter can do for himself. He will do for Peter what Peter is helpless to do.

Hopeless situations are permitted in the Decree to permit the believer to discover what God can do for him. Unable to free himself, Peter knew he could rely on the promises of God's Word by faith—resting his difficult predicament. Peter turned his difficulties over to the Lord and went to sleep.

Throughout the week, members of the Jerusalem church became engaged in prevailing intercessory prayer asking God the Father to intervene in liberating Peter from his imprisonment.

And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands. And the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak¹⁸ around you and follow me." (Acts 12:7-8)

At this moment in his imprisonment, unnatural events and miracles continued in rapid order: the light emanating from the angel illuminated the room; the angel entered the locked prison cell; Peter's chains fell to the floor; and the associated noise did not awaken the guards.

¹⁸ "The **tunic** was the essential garment ... held to the waist by a girdle of leather or coarse cloth. When men needed freedom to work or for running, they lifted the hem of the tunic and tucked it into the girdle to gain greater freedom of movement. The cloak (mantle) was worn on top of the tunic." (Ralph Gower, *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*, rev. ed. [Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2005], pages 10-12).

The angel then tells Peter, who is groggy and half asleep, that there were four things he must do by himself: **“gird yourself,” “put on your sandals,” “wrap your cloak (mantle) around you,”** and **“follow me.”** In short, God attended to events impossible for Peter to do in verse 7 while Peter dealt with basic tasks for which he was fully capable of doing in verse 8.

And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. (Acts 12:9-10)

Other miracles occurred. The guards outside the cell remained asleep as Peter and the angel walked out; then, the main gate to the prison **“opened for them by itself”** and the angel disappeared. Peter was indeed rescued from death by a miracle.

Why did the PROM chip of the Divine Decree result in God’s programming these miraculous events onto the ROM chip? *Answer: The abiding faith of Peter in the grace provisions offered by God and the prevailing intercessory prayers of believers in the Jerusalem church.*

Prayer is a divinely ordained system provided by God that empowers believers to communicate directly and privately with Him under the enabling power of God the Holy Spirit. Numerous verses in Scripture contain mandates instructing believers to pray, among which are the following:

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the [Holy] Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all petition and perseverance for all the believers. (*Eph. 6:18*)

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God. (*Phil. 4:6*)

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it [always vigilant] with an attitude of thanksgiving. (*Col. 4:2*)

Be joyful always; pray constantly; give thanks in all situations. (*1 Thess. 5:16-18*)

Blessed be to God, Who has not turned away my prayer nor His compassion from me. (*Ps. 66:20*)

If believers abide in Me (Christ) and My Words abide in them, ask whatever you wish and it shall be done for your personal advantage. (*John 15:7*)

Freed from prison, Peter realized what happened was not a vision but reality recorded in The Divine Decree; namely, his deliverance from destructive circumstances was of divine design.

When Peter came to himself, he said, 'Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting. And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary... where many were gathered together and were praying.'

(Acts 12:11-12)

When Peter arrived at Mary's home, he entered to the amazement of the group. For an entire week, they had been praying for his release but they did not believe Peter was present. At first, they assumed he was an angel but Peter related God's miracle in rescuing him from imprisonment.

Peter knew that by morning, Jerusalem would not be a safe place for him. He requested the group to relate the details of his prison escape to members of their local church. Despite the evidence, the Jerusalem church failed to learn essential lessons from Peter's miraculous escape. Although their recurring prayers to God for intercession were answered by Him, believers in Jerusalem lacked the spiritual commitment to persevere in their application of doctrine to life and circumstances.

Legalism had become so prevalent among Jewish believers in the East that God's Word was rejected in the city where Christianity originated. Thus, the spiritual revival journeyed westward during which the Apostle Paul disseminated God's Word to those with positive volition. *(see footnotes 7 and 21, pages 23 and 42, respectively).*

AFTERMATH

In Acts 12:19, Herod had the prison guards executed. Under Roman law, when guards allowed a prisoner to escape, they suffered the same penalty as would have been levied against the escaped prisoner.

Distraught over the consequences of Peter's escape from prison, Herod travelled to the community of Caesarea where He attended a festival at the local theater in honor of Claudius. He was dressed in an outfit woven completely from silver threads. As he addressed the crowd, the early morning sun's rays reflected dramatically off his silver ensemble, causing his sycophants to shout "**The voice of a god and not of a man!**" (Acts 12:22). Instant divine justice was administered when "**an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died**" (Acts 12:23).

Herod's sin unto death¹⁹ by means of a dreadful digestive ailment is described in Acts 12:23.

*Luke's reference to worms suggests an infection by intestinal roundworms, which grow as long as ten to sixteen inches and feed on the nutrient fluids in the intestines. Bunches of roundworms can obstruct the intestines, causing severe pain, copious vomiting of worms, and death. Luke sees it as part of God's activity on behalf of the Jerusalem church.*²⁰

¹⁹ Irreversibly controlled by chronic sinfulness, Herod underwent the final stage of divine judgment, or **dying discipline**, for his sins that occurred over an extended period of time (1 John 5:16).

²⁰ Richard N. Longnecker, "**The Acts of the Apostles**," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1981), 9:413

Prayers of the Jerusalem church resulted in the execution of a man exhibiting murder lust toward Christians. Some dictators, tyrants, and despots are allowed by God to initially create havoc within the Christian community, but once their cruelty served God's Plan, they are removed by Him from history.

Herod's anti-Christian hatred inspired those in Jerusalem to fervently pray for Peter's rescue. Their constant focus on prayer and the angel's rescue of Peter resulted in a spiritual revival. Although short-lived, the revival had its greatest spiritual impact elsewhere as doctrine was shared with people beyond Israel where God's Word was accepted: **"But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied"** (*Acts 12:24*). This verse emphasizes the importance of the week-long prayer meeting at Mary's house (*see page 40*) and the creation of an organization that would disseminate doctrine westward to Gentiles in Asia Minor and Europe (*see Acts 11:19-30 and 13:1-5*).²¹

Regrettably, the Jews had rejected their promised Messiah/Savior, thereby forfeiting their client nation status. In AD 70, Israel suffered the fifth cycle of discipline administered by the Roman legions' destruction of Jerusalem resulting in the worldwide dispersion of the Jews out of their native Israel.²²

²¹ For an expanded understanding of the westward Gospel journey from Israel to Asia Minor, throughout Europe, and eventually the United States of America, refer to Griffin, *Gospel's Missionary Journey* (2017), Joe Griffin Media Ministries, St Charles, Missouri.

²² See Griffin, *Gospel's Missionary Journey*, pages 57-58.

APPLICATION OF THE DECREE

God's Will establishes with certainty what events would actually occur and those that would not occur. We may question why God allowed James to be executed and Peter to be spared. However, knowing all that is knowable, God perceived the death of James would encourage prayers leading to Peter's escape from prison. James's death also became the catalyst for the Gospel to be shared with Gentiles during a momentous westward movement.

Spiritual complacency causes unawareness of historical downtrends. Often disaster testing is required to shock them out of their ignorance. Regarding the Jerusalem church, they were alerted to their failings when James was executed.

While in a Jerusalem prison, Peter did not panic or engage in self-pity. Instead, he claimed God's promises, recalled a doctrinal rationale, and rested on a doctrinal conclusion.²³ Peter's promise might have been what the Holy Spirit inspired him to write:

Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. (1 Pet. 5:6-7)

A doctrinal rationale is the recall of Bible doctrines pertinent to the present circumstance. Peter was in a hopeless situation requiring his reliance on God's grace for his life. He concluded that once his duty on

²³ See Appendix C, *Faith-Rest Life*, page 51, for further explanation.

earth was done, he would go to heaven when he died; if not, God would deliver him from danger. Regardless, Peter was at peace.

Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly... But if, when you do what is right and suffer for it, you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. (1 Pet. 2:18-20)

Peter's doctrinal conclusion was based on the fact that he was helpless to change his circumstances. However, he may have recalled the advice Moses offered the Exodus generation as the Egyptian army advanced toward their encampment:

Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today. The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent. (Ex. 14:13-14)

Perhaps Peter recalled Moses' advice when he wrote the following:

Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. (1 Pet. 4:12-13)

The Divine Decree contains the following provisions for our physical and spiritual lives:

- Our nourishment is provided by divine grace in two categories: (1) food, drink, and shelter for the body and (2) God's Word for the soul. As we must choose to eat what has been provided in grace, we must also use our free will to study and use doctrine in our daily lives.

It is written, Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

(Matt. 4:4)

- The Lord promised us physical clothing and food.

"Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' 'For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.'" *(Matt. 6:31-32)*

- The Lord promised spiritual clothing and food.

Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." *(John 8:31-32)*

When believers pray to the Father in the filling of the Spirit, that prayer is processed in heaven. Even

when uncertain concerning God's answer, His sovereignty still responds consistent with His Will and purpose in the Divine Decree.

Believers in the Jerusalem church spent a week in prayer, but when Peter arrived at Mary's house, they were in disbelief (*Acts 12:13-16*). Regardless of their amazement, Peter was indeed at the door, alive and well! The Decree contained the prevailing prayers of the believers in the PROM chip and God's answer was recorded in the ROM chip.

Believers in client nations are protected in the Divine Decree from evil rulers. Herod Agrippa's anti-Christian crusade was ended by his death in Caesarea. Another example of God's protection was Nero, the anti-Christian Emperor of Rome who committed suicide within weeks of his execution of Paul. Conversely, the Antonine Caesars supported the unrestricted expansion of Christianity within the Roman Empire (AD 96-180) (see Appendix D, page 52).

Other historical events were managed in the Decree by assisting in the rapid acceptance of Christianity throughout Europe and the Americas.

For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, declares the Lord. So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and succeeding in the manner for which I sent it. (*Isa. 55:8,11*)

CONCLUSION

Prayers inserted into the Decree were perceived in eternity past but answered in time. A prayer not prayed is not perceived, nor is there an answer to a petition not prayed. Divine guidance in our lives has no limits if we will utilize God's power. The power of prayer is always available for personal and national use.

Paul demanded that we **"Pray without ceasing,"** which is better translated, **"Keep on praying regularly as with the consistency of a hacking cough"** (*1 Thess. 5:17*). James commented on the power of prayer when he wrote, **"The fervent prayer of a righteous person is very powerful"** (*James 5:17b, NET*).

Our nation is in need of such prayers. Believers with doctrine in their souls are best prepared to appeal to God for the deliverance of our country. Therefore, we should openly confront the following challenge our Lord directed to Solomon concerning the nation of Israel.

When I close up the sky so that it doesn't rain, or command locusts to devour the land's vegetation, or send a plague among My people, and if My people, who belong to Me, humble themselves, pray, seek to please Me, and repudiate their sinful practices, then I will respond from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land. Now I will be attentive and responsive to the prayers offered in this place. (*2 Chr. 7:13-15*)

Angelic Conflict

When God created the universe, He created a race of super-creatures known as angels that included Lucifer, the most exalted of His creation. In eternity past, Lucifer abused his freedom due to arrogance and power lust. Obsessed with being like God (*Isa. 14:14*), he persuaded one-third of the angelic creation (*fallen angels*) to join in a rebellion against God's authority (*Rev. 12:3-9*).

Throughout history, Satan and his fallen angels have engaged in an invisible war with God known as the **Angelic Conflict**, disputing God's authority instead of worshiping Him as their Creator. As a result, Satan and his angelic and human agents strive relentlessly to establish a pseudo one-world, Christ-like millennium on earth. To counteract God's grace, Satan substitutes human or secular viewpoint for divine viewpoint based on doctrine and the ministries of the Holy Spirit.

*Evil thinking leads to evil function, and such satanic doctrines as socialism, activism, and legalism lead people to sincerely pursue "noble" ends at the expense of divinely ordained human freedom, privacy, property, prosperity, and spiritual growth. Satan operates under the proposition that the end justifies the means; thus, he resorts to violence whenever necessary to accomplish his "good" deeds (*John 8:44*).²⁴*

²⁴ Thieme, *The Integrity of God* (2005), page 54.

These satanic efforts to solve the world's problems consist of humanistic and legalistic solutions enforced by an arrogant few with power lust. Found guilty of rebellion against God, Satan and his fallen angels were sentenced by God's justice to the Lake of Fire:

Your [Satan's] heart became arrogant on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor ... So I [God] made a fire come out from you, and it [the Lake of Fire] will consume you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching. (Ezek. 28:17-18)

When Satan protested his sentence, God graciously deferred His final verdict until the end of human history.²⁵ An appeal was granted allowing Satan to try to refute the guilty verdict (*Job* 1:6-12; *Zech.* 3:1-2). Concurrently, God created the human race to prove that a species inferior to angels, but with identical free will, would choose Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Thus, free-will decisions of mankind throughout human history serve as reliable witnesses for God and validate His impartial sentencing of Satan to the Lake of Fire. By observing human history, angels also become dependable eyewitnesses to Satan's guilt and God's perfect grace and justice in the world.²⁶

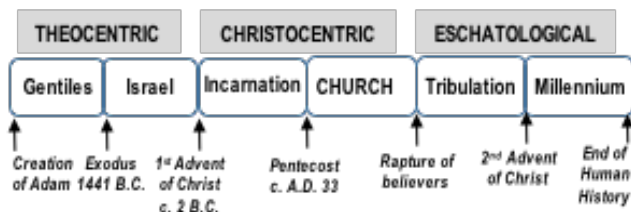
²⁵ See Appendix B, *Divine Timeline of Human History*, page 50.

²⁶ Scriptures include *Job* 1:6,2:1-3; *Luke* 15:7,10; *1 Cor.* 4:9,11:10; *Eph.* 3:10; *1 Tim.* 3:16,5:21.

Timeline of Human History

The divine timetable of human history consists of six dispensations during which God manages His grace plan for mankind by assigning to specific individuals the responsibility of protecting and sharing His Word throughout the world (*Acts 1:7*). God differentiates each dispensation with new assignments of responsibility and divine mandates together with provisions for fulfilling those mandates. To counter God's plans, Satan creates new strategies to prevent or disrupt the future course of human history.²⁷

DIVINE TIMELINE OF HUMAN HISTORY



Theocentric Age (*God-centered*) began with the creation of Adam and ended with the First Advent (virgin birth) of Jesus Christ.

Christocentric Age (*Christ-centered*) began with the birth of Christ and ends with the Rapture (or Resurrection) of the Church.

Eschatological Age (*Prophecies not yet fulfilled*) occurs after the Rapture and terminates with the end of human history.

The Eternal State (*Eternity*) follows the end of human history.

²⁷ See Griffin, *One Day at a Time* (2013), pages 72–98.

FAITH—REST LIFE ²⁸

When struggling with life's difficulties (***faith***), and trusting in that faith while patiently waiting for God's divine guidance and provision (***rest***), unfailing belief in Jesus Christ provides the positive believer with access to "**the inner peace of God**" (Phil. 4:7). The Faith–Rest Life may be summarized as follows:

Combining the promises of God with enduring faith and trust in His Word, resulting in a condition of physical rest and mental clarity, freed from anxiety and filled with total confidence in God's faithfulness to resolve the pressures in the believer's life, whereby Jesus Christ is glorified and His Word is magnified.

Believers must submit their problems to the Lord, replacing emotionalism with calmness and clarity resulting in problem resolution (1 Pet. 5:6–11).

By claiming God's promises, the stressed believer is divinely motivated to recall doctrines applicable to the resolution of his difficulties. From among many doctrines available, God's perfect essence provides absolute assurance that whatever God promises He accomplishes perfectly.

Thus, if God is in control, then the believer may trust that his life and/or circumstances endangered by stress or pressure are also under control (1 John 4:4).

²⁸ Adapted from Griffin, ***Promises of God*** (2016), pages 85–86.

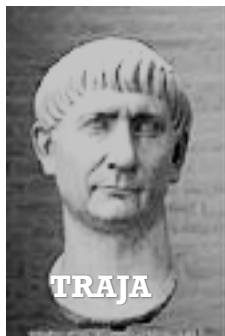
Appendix D

The Antonine Dynasty

The Five Good Emperors



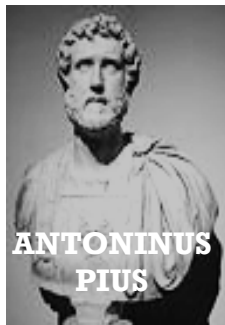
**Marcus Cocceius
Nerva**
18 Sept. 96 to
27 Jan. 98



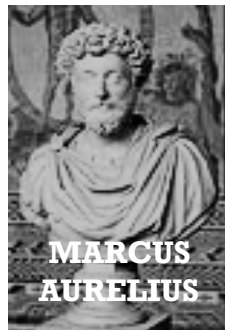
**Marcus Ulpius
Traianus**
28 Jan. 98 to
9 Aug. 117



**Publius Aelius
Hadrianus**
10 Aug. 117 to
10 July 138



**Augustus
Pius**
11 July to
7 March 161



**Marcus
Aurelius**
8 Mar 161 to
17 Mar 180

ABOUT THE AUTHOR ...

Joe Griffin is pastor of Grace Doctrine Church and president of Joe Griffin Media Ministries, both located in St. Charles, Missouri. He is a graduate of the University of Alabama and, after a career in television production, was ordained as a Pastor in God's grace ministry by Berachah Church in Houston, Texas.

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Griffin has authored ten books: *God Exists, Safe to Die? Know What God Thinks, Does He Hear My Prayer? Forty Proclamations, One Day at a Time, Promises of God, Gospel's Missionary Journey, Whirlwind*, and *The Divine Decree*, and was editor of Joe Hunt's *Who Loves You?* ‡

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‡ **See Published Books** (*inside back cover*)

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John and his wife, Susan, live in St. Louis County, Missouri, and enjoy sharing in the lives of four children, their spouses, and eleven grandchildren.

‡ See **Published Books** (*inside back cover*)

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My [God's] word will not return to Me empty,
without accomplishing what I desire, and
succeeding in the manner for which I sent it.
(Isa. 55:11)

All things were created by Him and for Him
[Christ]. He is before all things, and by Him
everything in creation is regulated and
controlled. (Col. 1:16-17 EXT)

We know that God causes all things to work
together for good to those who love God, to
those who are called according to His purpose.
(Rom. 8:28)



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