

Lesson 5 **THE DECREE OF GOD**

5.1 **Doctrine of God's Decree**

The one triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, carries out one **decree** or **counsel**, which governs all things in heaven and on earth throughout eternity. The Scriptures reveal that all things happen according to the will of God, and nothing occurs without His foreknowledge. All Persons agree and act in harmony in executing the divine will.

5.2 **Scriptural Terms for God's Decree**

1. Old Testament

- a. decree - Psalm 2:7; Micah 7:11
- b. counsel - Isaiah 46:10,11, 14:26; Job 38:2, Genesis 50:20
- c. will, good pleasure - Isaiah 53:10, 49:8; Psalm 51:19

2. New Testament

- a. plan - Luke 7:30; Acts 2:23
- b. will - Ephesians 1:11
- c. purpose - Romans 8:28, 29, 9:11; Hebrews 6:17
- d. counsel - Acts 2:23, 20:27
- e. foreknowledge - Romans 8:29
- f. good pleasure - Matthew 11:26; Luke 2:14; Ephesians 1:5,9

5.3 **Description of God's Decree**

- a. eternal - Acts 15:18, Ephesians 1:4

- b. free - Matthew 11:26
- c. unchangeable - Hebrews 6:17
- d. powerful - Isaiah 14:27
- e. inclusive of human responsibility - Genesis 50:20, Acts 2:23, Isaiah 10:5,7; John 11:49,50; Joshua 1-8.

5.4 The Order of the Decrees

Scripture speaks of several decrees, for example, the decrees of creation, providence, predestination, election, and reprobation. We cannot unravel their order in the mind of God, for that has not been revealed to us. The decree is eternal, and thus one. In distinguishing the different aspects of the decree, our confessions follow the “human” or “natural” order:

election ---> eternal salvation

creation ---> fall --->

reprobation ---> eternal judgment and damnation

According to this “human” order, that is, the order from the point of view of man, the doctrine of election (the decree of predestination) is treated after the doctrine of redemption, (see Lesson 16).

5.5 The Basis of the Decree

The foundation of God’s decree is not Jesus Christ, as some have taught. The basis of the decree is to be found solely in the good pleasure of God, Matthew 11:26. Christ is the foundation of our salvation.

Exercises Lesson 5

I. References Passages

Study and Review: Belgic Confession, Article 16.
 Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21
 The Canons of Dort, Chapter 1

II. Review Questions

1. What does the word **decree** mean?
2. What are the parts of God's decree?
3. What role does man play in God's decree?
4. Name some sects and churches which deny or misrepresent God's eternal decree, and explain how they do so.
5. Why is the doctrine of God's decree so important for us?

III. Extra Questions

1. What is the final goal of God's decree?
2. How does God's decree reveal His mercy? His justice?
3. What is the connection between Article 16 and Article 20 of the Belgic Confession?