

The Sovereignty of God

Part 3: God's Purposes

The Display of His Glory and Excellence – The Ultimate End

God created the world for many purposes. Indeed, everything He created fulfills a specific purpose in His grand scheme for the ages. As we have already seen, all things work out in conformity with His sovereign purposes.

Proverbs 16:4: **The LORD has made everything for its own purpose,** Even the wicked for the day of evil.

Question #62: For what most basic reason does every created thing (even the wicked) exist? _____

Now, consider these verses:

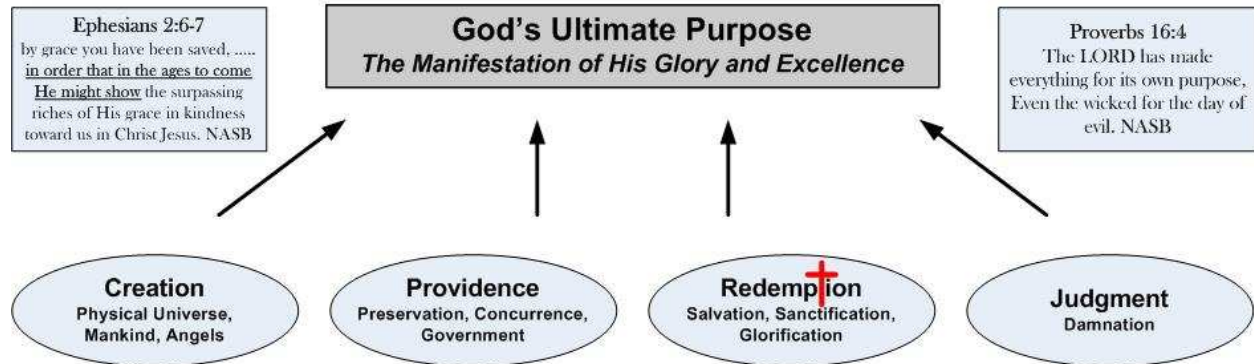
Ephesians 1:11-12: ¹¹also we have obtained an inheritance, having been **predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,** ¹²**to the end** that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

Question #63: According to Ephesians 1:11-12, how did we obtain an inheritance? _____

Question #64: According to Ephesians 1:11-12, for what purpose (end) did we obtain our inheritance? _____

Ephesians 1:11-12 reveals that although the salvation of the saints was predestined according to God's purpose, the salvation of the saints *is not God's highest purpose*. God's predestination of the salvation of the saints was *"to the end that we.....should be to the praise of His glory."* Note well that the salvation of men and women supports the higher purpose of the *praise of the glory of God!* How then should we answer the question: What is God's *highest* purpose in creating all things? In other words, what ultimate purpose do all of God's other purposes serve? To paraphrase the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*: What is the chief end of God? The following chart clearly shows us the answer.

“The chief end of God in the creation of all things is to manifest the Glory and Excellency of His own nature as God, and to express through creation, providence and redemption the manifold perfections of His divine character”



ALL PURPOSES OF GOD SERVE THE HIGHER PURPOSE OF THE DISPLAY OF HIS GLORY!

Question #65: Is the idea presented in the chart a new one for you? _____ If so, what is your initial reaction to it? _____

(If you are confused or troubled by this idea, please continue studying the lesson with a prayerful willingness to submit your heart and mind to the truth of Scripture.)

Dear reader, God is a Being of such awesome wonder and exquisite beauty that the expression of His being is the highest and most glorious concept conceivable. Furthermore, *reflecting God's character and nature in an intimate personal relationship with Him* is the most fulfilling and exhilarating of all human experiences. Thus, this is the highest purpose for which we were created. As the Westminster Catechism states, "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." This assertion is well-supported in Scripture.

1 Chronicles 16:28-29: ²⁸Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, **Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.** ²⁹Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; Bring an offering, and come before Him; **Worship the LORD in holy array.**

Isaiah 42:12: **Let them give glory to the LORD,** And declare His praise in the coastlands.

Isaiah 43:7: Everyone who is called by My name, **And whom I have created for My glory,** Whom I have formed, even whom I have made.

Psalms 99:9: **Exalt the LORD our God,** And worship at His holy hill; For holy is the LORD our God.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20: ¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰**For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.**

Matthew 5:16: **Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**

1 Peter 2:12: Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

1 Corinthians 10:31: Whether, then, you eat or drink or **whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**

Question #66: From the above verses, list several *specific ways* in which we are commanded to give God glory. _____

The Bible consistently subordinates all human purposes to our ultimate purpose of glorifying God. Dear Reader, here is the meaning of our lives! The Lord Himself taught the same thing when He answered a Pharisee's question by identifying the great commandments. He said all the Law and Prophets (in other words, the whole Old Testament) are summed up in these two commandments.

Matthew 22:34-40: ³⁴But when the Pharisees heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they gathered themselves together. ³⁵And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, to test Him, ³⁶“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷And He said to him, **“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”** ³⁸**This is the great and foremost commandment.** ³⁹**The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’** ⁴⁰On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

Here Jesus tells us that the chief purpose for our existence is to *love God*, i.e., to worship Him with everything within us. The meaning of worship is **to ascribe worth or value to something**. Consider this definition in relation to God's highest purpose for us. God seeks to manifest or show forth the excellence of His character and commands us to love, praise, and revere Him. Sin, therefore, is an abominable failure to fulfill our chief end because it doesn't reflect love for God and, consequently, doesn't glorify Him. Therefore, it fails to fulfill the high purpose for which He created us. This is also why even one sin violates the whole law of God. When we Christians sin, we fall short of our chief end of glorifying and enjoying God. And He takes action immediately to get us back on track! He faithfully convicts us of our failure and drives us to confess and repent through the work of His Holy Spirit. When we respond in love to His conviction, we return to glorifying God by reflecting His merciful forgiveness to those around us.

James 2:10: For whoever keeps the whole law and **yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.**

1 John 1:8-9: ⁸If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹**If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

Question #67: In your own words, describe how repentance and confession of sin glorifies God. _____

Question #68: Explain why the fact that repentance and confession of sin glorifies God must not be used by a Christian as a license to sin. _____

God's highest purpose is NOT the salvation of mankind.

Many people mistakenly believe that God's highest purpose is the salvation of men and women. They wrongly reason that since we are created in God's image and are therefore the pinnacle of His creative work, God's highest priority must be preventing us from falling into damnation. This idea is foreign to the Bible's teaching, however. Scripture affirms that God ordained the fall of mankind from eternity for His own immutable purpose and by His eternal decree. He purposed from the beginning for mankind to fall, so that He could redeem some to eternal life while others were damned. How can we be so sure these are God's purposes? Because this is in *fact what happens*, which is the definition of God's sovereign will. Everything that unfolds in the course of history must be the outworking of the sovereign decree of God. Not only is this reasonably inferred by a common sense understanding of sovereignty, but the Bible plainly states that God is responsible for the fall and that He planned redemption from before the creation of the world.

Romans 9:14-24: ¹⁴What shall we say then? **There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!** ¹⁵For He says to Moses, **"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."** ¹⁶So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. ¹⁷For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth." ¹⁸So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. ¹⁹You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" ²⁰On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? ²¹Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use? ²²What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? ²³And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

1 Peter 1:20-21: ²⁰For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you ²¹who through Him are believers in