The Divine Decree: The Computer of the Divine Decree: Causes, Conditions, Successions, & Relations; the PROM & ROM Chips; Categories of Divine Knowledge: Self-Knowledge, Omniscience, & Foreknowledge; Potential v. Reality

11.   In eternity past God knew of the decisions that would bring biological life into the world and it was in eternity past that He made the decision to select individuals into human life.

12.   Having done so, He also knew in eternity past every thought, decision, and action each individual would express from his free will.

13.   Each of these thoughts constitutes a cause which has an effect. Each effect becomes a subsequent cause that continues the chain.

14.   At this point we must review the definition of the decree:

       The decree of God is His eternal, holy, wise, and sovereign purpose, *comprehending* simultaneously all things that ever were or will be in their causes, conditions, successions, and relations and determining their certain futurition.

15.   "**Causes**" refers to a thought, decision, or action; "**conditions**" refer to its category, i.e., positive or negative; right or wrong; divine good or human good; "**successions**" refer to subsequent causes and effects; "**relations**" refer to the cumulative impact of the first cause.

16.   Every free-will decision has consequences that either glorify God or not and always affects you positively or negatively. Its impact on others is recognized by God and the interpersonal impact is observed and placed in the decree.

17.   Picture the divine decree as illustrated by a giant computer into which God from His omniscience programs the computer with every decision you make in your life and those of every other selected person throughout human history.

Visual #4-A:

Computer of the Divine Decree

18.   Omniscience recognizes each of these thoughts, decisions, actions, and related events and enters them into the computer.

19.   In the course of a person's life there are decisions that are sinful and righteous. God knows the alternatives that would have occurred had those decisions been opposite of what they were.

20.   What if you had married Maurine rather than Margaret; Fred instead of Frank? Attended L.S.U. instead of Alabama? Moved to a Southern coastal community rather than a Northern river city?

21.   Think of the variables involved with the alternatives regarding your children: who would have been your children from a different spouse; who would have been their friends, the one they chose to marry, and the impact the alternate choice of a spouse would have had on your progeny throughout history?

22.   What are the alternatives that would have resulted had you rejected the gospel; chosen a different profession, or selected a different neighborhood?

23.   The omniscience of God knows the actual from the potential, but only the actual is fed into the computer.

24.   The principle: "In human history, the sovereignty of God and the free will of man coexist by divine decree" must also be recognized. There are innumerable divine decisions that are fed into the computer.

25.   Knowing how each individual believer would use his volition, God structured into the computer His own decisions: the provision of logistical grace for every believer and blessings to those who make the spiritual advance.

26.   Also included is His divine response to the individual decisions of each believer so that good decisions broaden and expand future options resulting in spiritual prosperity while bad decisions limit and contract future options resulting in discipline and punishment.

27.   The presence of divine and human involvement in the programming of the computer may be viewed by man from two standpoints:

(1)   Efficacious: that which is directly wrought by God from His sovereignty.

(2)   Permissive: that which is appointed by God to be accomplished by secondary causes or by the free will and actions of agents, i.e., the free will of man.

28.   These two categories of data are retained in the computer on two chips: **(1)** Efficacious on a ROM chip (Read–Only Memory) and **(2)** Permissive on a PROM chip (Programmable Read–Only Memory).

29.   The ROM chip contains decisions made by the sovereignty of God while the PROM chip contains decisions made by human free will.

30.   A ROM chip is an integrated circuit into which unchanging data can be read, but into which no new data can be written. This illustrates God's perfect knowledge of history in eternity past and emphasizes His immutability.

31.   The PROM chip is an integrated circuit with fixed data that can be read but not altered. This illustrates how the thoughts, decisions, and actions of every person are fed into the computer.

32.   The readout occurs in time, but what God discerned you would decide cannot be altered. You can't trick God.

33.   Knowing every circumstance the believer would face, including problems, tests, trials, disasters, and failures, God incorporated solutions to every one of them.

34.   These solutions are contained in the sovereignty of God chip and its printout is what we refer to as the Bible.

35.   The believer is mandated to study, learn, retain, and apply its guidance in the resolution of every exigency of life.

36.   Understanding the omniscience of God is critical to understanding the divine decree.

Categories of Divine Knowledge:

1.   The exhaustive or comprehensive knowledge of God may be classified in three ways: **(1)** Self-knowledge, **(2)** omniscience, and **(3)** foreknowledge.

2.   **Self-knowledge:** Each member of the Trinity has total and complete knowledge of the other two. They are completely aware of their perfection and unlimited abilities. They are aware of the unlimited capabilities of their divine attributes and how they manifest themselves as infinite glory.

3.   **Omniscience:** God knows all that is knowable regarding every aspect of His creation, the angelic race, and the human race. This knowledge includes all things related to believers and unbelievers—both the reality of what does occur and the potentiality of what is possible but does not occur.

Visual #4-B:

Computer of the Divine Decree

4.   He knows the variables we encounter that demand decisions. He knows the outcome of each possibility from its potential first cause to the ultimate relationship related to other people and things.

5.   However, omniscience only recognizes as real the actual decision you make and it is programmed into the computer in the PROM chip.

6.   Therefore, what we decide is recognized by His omniscience and is entered into the computer. Those decisions we do not make are known to Him, but are not recognized as reality and thus not entered into the computer.

7.   **Foreknowledge:** This is a printout from the computer which only acknowledges what is in the decree. The foreknowledge of God *makes* nothing certain; it merely *acknowledges* what is certain.

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

9.   Foreknowledge is a printout from the computer regarding the believer only.

10.   Therefore, the sequence of events that took place in programming the divine decree began with omniscience looking forward into the totality of time and observing all that takes place during human history.

11.   The attribute enabling God to do this is omniscience which is able to observe the thoughts, decisions, and actions of believers and to separate this reality from those things that potentially could have occurred but did not.

12.   The potential is ignored while the reality is placed into the computer of the divine decree on the PROM chip.

13.   In response to this data, the sovereignty of God makes decisions that are designed to manage the free-will decisions of mankind.

14.   This includes logistical support, protection, blessing, reward, punishment, and discipline.

15.   What omniscience determines as reality is put into the decree. It is a record of future decisions made by believers.

16.   Foreknowledge merely recognizes what omniscience decreed; it makes nothing certain, it only reports what is in the decree.

17.   To illustrate this, take the BCS Championship game played earlier this year down in New Orleans. Let's imagine that you knew you were not going to be able to watch the game live but captured the action on your TiVo.

18.   Later you watched the game with someone who did view it live. Your friend would be able to "prophesy" what would take place before it occurred on playback: he could announce what would happen beforehand: recount some of the major plays, how one of the teams was actually able to score, announce the final score, and described the presentation of the Waterford football.

19.   It's a poor illustration to give in Louisiana, but it does provide a way of grasping how omniscience was able to program the computer with an account of actual events as opposed to potential events.

20.   Omniscience is not restricted by time and thus able to observe human history play out before man was created. This means that God did not in any way influence human free will. His omniscience only comprehended free will and then entered what would take place into the decree.

21. Foreknowledge is a printout of what believers will do during their lifetimes—every thought, decision, and action—but it is the decree that establishes the reality of these things.

22. The decree occurred in eternity past, but the execution of what is in the decree transpires in time.

23. Therefore, who you are is what you think and what you think is what you decide and what you decide is what you do.

24. This brings us to an analysis of the how the sovereignty of God and the free will of man coexist within the divine decree.