

10. The verse continues to reveal the source of these gifts are “from above, coming down from the Father of lights.” The sequence of events of our reception of these gifts is revealed. It begins with the phrase “from above” referring to the third heaven.
11. The source is described as the “Father of lights” referring to the interstellar universe. Advancing believers are the recipients to whom the gifts “come down.”
12. God created the universe in absolute perfection which is discerned from Genesis 1:1 and emphasized by the Qal perfect of the Hebrew verb **בָּרָא** (*bara'*): to create instantly something that did not previously exist. The Latin term is *creatio ex nihilo*.
13. Among the things that God created *ex nihilo* include the heavenly bodies that exist in the universe noted in Isaiah 40:26, and the new heavens and the new earth in Isaiah 65:17.
14. Modern science refutes the Bible’s revelation that the universe was created by God in a yoctosecond.² Here is a recent estimate of the age of the universe and how its stars developed:

About 13.8 billion years ago, just 400,000 years or so after the big bang, the universe abruptly went dark. Before that time, the entire visible universe was a hot, seething, roiling plasma—a dense cloud of protons, neutrons and electrons.

Around the 400,000-year mark, however, the expanding universe cooled enough for hydrogen atoms to form at last—an event known as recombination. The fog lifted, the universe continued to cool and everything quickly faded to black. After the unimaginable brilliance of the big bang and its immediate aftermath, the cosmos entered what astronomers call the dark ages of the universe.

² “One septillionth of a second. From the International System of Units (SI) prefix *yocto-*, “denoting a factor of 10^{-24} ,” and second or .000000000000000000000001. It is the smallest SI unit and was adopted in 1991” (Simon Hertnon, *Endangered Words: A Collection of Rare Gems for Word Lovers* [New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2009], 206–207).

A decade or so ago astronomers believed that they had a good handle on how the first generation of stars came to be. Immediately after recombination, the hydrogen atoms that filled the cosmos were spread uniformly through space. In contrast, dark matter, which physicists believe to be made of invisible particles that have not yet been identified, had already begun clumping together in clouds known as halos, averaging between 100,000 and one million solar masses.

As the gas became increasingly concentrated and heated up, it flared into light, creating the first stars in the universe.³

15. James 1:17 clearly confirms that God is the Father of lights, referring to the stars which Isaiah confirms in Isaiah 40:26.
16. In addition to the heavenly objects is gravity, the fundamental physical force that is responsible for interactions which occur between stars and planets. It is Jesus Christ who is responsible for the gravitation that holds everything together.
17. This doctrine is certified by Paul in Colossians 1:15–17 which emphasis on:

Colossians 1:17 And He is before [aoristic present active indicative of εἰμί (*eimí*): He keeps on being before, i.e. eternity past] all things, and all things by means of Him hold together [intensive perfect⁴ active indicative of the verb συνίστημι (*sunístēmi*): gravitation].

18. Numerous passages in the Tanakh amplify this truth:

Psalms 136:1 Give thanks to the Lord,
for He is good ...

v. 7 To Him who made the great lights ...

v. 8 The sun to rule by day ...

v. 9 The moon and stars to rule by night, for
His lovingkindness [חֶסֶד (*cheseth*): unfailing love] is everlasting. (NASB)

³ Michael D. Lemonick, “The First Starlight,” *Scientific American*, April 2014, 40.

⁴ “The perfect tense may be used to *emphasize* the results or present state produced by a past action. ‘The Greek [present] tense is concerned with *result*, while the English [present] tense is concerned solely with the absence of an *interval*.’ The Greek perfect should be extensive, not intensive. This use of the perfect does not exclude the notion of a completed act; rather, it *focuses* on the resultant state” (Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 574–75).

19. The following verses contain the Hebrew noun, **חֶסֶד** (*cheseth*). Regardless of the English translations, the correct translation is “unfailing love” in Exodus 34:6; Deuteronomy 7:9; 1 Kings 8:23; 1 Chronicles 16:34; Psalm 57:10; 86:15; and 136:1–26. The King James Version translates *cheseth* “mercy” in these verses and “lovingkindness” in others.
20. The translation, “unfailing love,” of the Hebrew noun *cheseth* comes from research done by R. B. Thieme, Jr.:

For centuries scholars have debated over the precise definition of *chesed*, but my long study of its etymology has given me a clear understanding of the meaning of this word. The best translation of *chesed* is not “goodness” or “lovingkindness” as in the New American Standard and King James versions, but “unfailing love.”⁵

21. Likewise, in the New Testament, the following verses contain the Greek phrase, **τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ θεοῦ** (*tēn agápēn tou theou*): “the love of God,” but better translated, “the unfailing love of God,” in Luke 11:42; Romans 5:5; 8:39; 2 Thessalonians 3:5; 1 John 4:9; and 5:3.
22. The divine attribute of God’s love is evident in the creation of the universe in:
- Psalm 136:5** **To Him Who made the heavens**
[First and Second] with skill, for His unfailing love is
everlasting. (CTL)
23. The love of God is replete throughout Scripture and it is evident in James’s comments in James 1:17 with regard to the creation of the “lights” in the sky.
24. Since God is the “Father of lights,” then James goes on to report, “with Whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.”
25. Although the mechanics of orbital motions do from time to time alter the brilliance of these heavenly bodies, the verse informs us that their Creator does not vary nor does He engage in shifting shadows. This is because of His immutability.

⁵ R. B. Thieme, Jr., *The Unfailing Love of God*, ed. Robert B. Thieme III (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2009), 9.

26. Principle: If the creation of the universe and all that is in it is from the “Father of lights,” then it may be stated that every gift from the “Father of lights” is perfect and, unlike the luminaries of the universe, there is never a variation in the form of shadows.
27. So far we have the following expanded translation of:
- James 1:17a** Every good-of-intrinsic-value act of giving and every completed gift keep on being from above, coming down from the ultimate source of the Father of lights ... (EXT)
28. So, get this point: The universe, in which you are an infinitesimal part, was designed for you. James 1:17 is designed to convince you that everything in your life is a gift of intrinsic value.
29. At this point we studied the Doctrine of Good of Intrinsic Value Assets in JAS1-96 through -98.

James 1:17 Every good-of-intrinsic-value act of giving and every completed gift keeps on being from above, coming down from the ultimate source of the Father of lights, with Whom there is no change or alteration or the occurrence of an eclipse. (EXT)

James 1:18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures. (NASB)

1. The verse begins with the phrase “In the exercise of His will.” The word “will” is the aorist passive participle of the verb **βούλομαι** (*boúlomai*). When related to God it refers to His divine decree.
2. What is murky is the use of the word *will* which has a number of definitions in English. What we need is an English definition that refers to the thinking of God. To find that we must go to Noah Webster’s *An American Dictionary of the English Language* published in 1828:

Divine determination; to decide in the mind that something shall be done or forborne; implying power to carry the purpose into effect. In this manner God *wills* whatever comes to pass.⁶

3. This is the best we can do in English, but the verb **βούλομαι** (*boúloomai*), when referring to the will of God, is best translated, “divine 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 futuration.

The decree of God is His eternal and immutable will regarding the future existence of events which will happen in time and regarding the precise order and manner of their occurrence.

The divine decree is the eternal plan by which God has rendered certain all the events of the universe, including both angelic and human history—past, present, and future. God’s decree rendered all things as certain to occur. In doing so, He did not interfere with angelic or human free will! In fact, He decreed that we would have free will!⁷

4. The passive voice of *boúloomai* requires the translation, “having been decreed.” Further, the action of the aorist participle always precedes the action of the main verb which at all times is in the indicative mood.
5. The main verb here is the aorist active indicative of **ἀποκυέω** (*apokuéō*): “to give birth from the ultimate source.” This word is the compound of the prefix *apó*, “from,” a preposition of ultimate source that is attached to the verb *kyéō* “to be pregnant.”
6. To smooth out the translation, the verse’s opening reads, “Having been decreed in eternity past, God regenerated *us* by a spiritual birth.” The pronoun *us* refers to those who believe in Jesus Christ in human history.
7. The doctrine of regeneration is among the 40 things imputed to the believer at the moment of salvation.
 - (1) Regeneration is a theological term and is commonly referred to as the second birth and also the act of being “born again.”

⁶ Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1st ed. (New York: S. Converse, 1828, repr. San Francisco: Foundation for American Christian Education, 2000), s.v. “will.”

⁷ R. B. Thieme, Jr., “The Doctrine of the Divine Decree,” in *The Integrity of God*, 4th ed., 297–98.

- (2) Jesus used this term in His opening remarks to Nicodemus in:

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to Nicodemus, “I am telling you the truth, unless one is born again [γεννηθῆ ἄνωθεν (*gennēthē ánōthen*): “born from above”] he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (EXT)

- (3) The term, “born again” refers to spiritual birth at salvation which by application refers only to believers saved by grace through faith.
- (4) Occasionally we hear a person make the statement, “I am a ‘born-again’ Christian,” or pose the question, “Are you a ‘born-again’ Christian?” Principle: You are not a Christian unless you have been born again therefore the phrase, “born-again Christian,” is a periphrasis.⁸
- (5) Jesus gave an excellent formula for how one may be “born from above” in John 3:16. It is the imputation of divine righteousness that confirms a person’s “birth from above.”

8. Here is how our expanded translation reads so far:

James 1:18a “Having been decreed in eternity past, God regenerated us by a spiritual birth

...

1. The verse continues, “... by the word of truth,” which gives us the link between the divine decree in eternity past and the regeneration of the believer in time.
2. His omniscience means He knew what decision each person would make with regard to the gospel. This in no way implies that He determined who would believe in eternity past but that He perceived who would personally make the decision to believe in time.
3. The principle regarding divine election is stated as follows: In human history, the sovereignty of God and the free will of man coexist by divine decree.

⁸ “A roundabout way of referring to something by means of several words instead of naming it directly in a single word” (Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 165.