

He has made. At God's command, the great springs of the deep burst forth in the days of Noah. His voice opened the heavens and ordered rain to pour down for forty days and nights. Tornados and tempests, lightning and thunder, winds and waves ... all are God's servants sent to do His bidding and perform all His good pleasure. *No* maverick storm has ever raged through God's creation outside of God's ruling hand of Providence!

Job 37:1-13: ¹At this also my heart trembles, And leaps from its place. ²Listen closely to the thunder of His voice, And the rumbling that goes out from His mouth. ³Under the whole heaven **He lets it loose, And His lightning to the ends of the earth.** ⁴After it, a voice roars; He thunders with His majestic voice;

And He does not restrain the lightnings when His voice is heard. ⁵God thunders with His voice wondrously, Doing great things which we cannot comprehend. **⁶For to the snow He says, "Fall on the earth," And to the downpour and the rain, "Be strong."** ⁷**He seals the hand of every man, That all men may know His work.** ⁸Then the beast goes into its lair, And remains in its den. ⁹Out of the south comes the storm, And out of the north the cold. ¹⁰**From the breath of God ice is made,** And the expanse of the waters is frozen. ¹¹Also with moisture He loads the thick cloud; He disperses the cloud of His lightning. ¹²And it changes direction, turning around by His guidance, That it may do whatever He commands it On the face of the inhabited earth. ¹³**Whether for correction, or for His world, Or for lovingkindness, He causes it to happen.**

Psalm 135:6-7: ⁶Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps. ⁷**He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; Who makes lightnings for the rain; Who brings forth the wind from His treasures.**

Mark 4:38-41: ³⁸And He Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And **the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.** ⁴⁰And He said to them, "Why are you so timid? How is it that you have no faith?" ⁴¹And they became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

Job 38:12-13: ¹²Have you ever in your life **commanded the morning, And caused the dawn to know its place;** ¹³That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, And the wicked be shaken out of it?

Psalm 103:20: Bless the LORD, you His angels, Mighty in strength, **who perform His word, Obeying the voice of His word!**

Question #29: From the Scriptures quoted above, list specific words (verbs) that describe God's and Jesus's involvement with nature. _____

Question #30: In each case, what happened as a result of God and Jesus's involvement? _____

Question #31: According to Psalm 103:20, how do angels relate to God? _____

Question #32: Summarize in your own words what are these Scriptures teach about God. _____

Question #33: Describe your mental and emotional reaction to this teaching. _____

God's Control of History

Not only does God control nature, but also the events of history. The Scripture plainly declares that God is the primary cause behind every historical occurrence.

Lamentations 3:37-38: ³⁷Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, **Unless the Lord has commanded it?** ³⁸Is it not from the mouth of the Most High That both good and ill go forth?

Isaiah 45:7: The One forming light and creating darkness, **Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these.**

Consider these words of **Jonathan Edwards**: *"God decreed from all eternity all the evil that He ever does permit, because God's permitting is God's forbearing to act or to prevent. It can be made evident by reason that nothing can come to pass but what is the will and pleasure of God should come to pass."*¹¹

God's control over the events of history is plainly evident in Scripture. The Bible consistently testifies to the fact that God is providentially working His will in all things to accomplish His purposes for the display of His own Glory, exalt His Name, and affirm His Power.

Ephesians 1:9-11: ⁹He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him ¹⁰with a **view to an administration suitable to the fulness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth.** In Him ¹¹also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined **according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,**

Many examples of God's control over the events of history can be cited from the Old Testament. Here are just a few:

- The creation account (Genesis 1-2)
- The flood (Genesis 6-8)
- The confounding of human languages at Babel: (Genesis 11)
- The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah: (Genesis 19)
- The plagues of Egypt: (Exodus 7-12)
- The Exodus, parting of the Red Sea, giving of manna and water from the rock: (Exodus 14-17)
- Giving of the Law at Sinai: (Exodus 19-20)
- Defeat of Sihon and Og: (Numbers 21)
- Conquest of Canaan: (Joshua)
- Numerous divine interventions: (Judges)
- Defeat of Sennacherib and 185,000 Assyrians: (2 Kings 19)

¹¹Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2. Peabody, MA: Henrickson Publishers, 1998 (reprint from an 1834 edition originally published in Great Britain), 529.

Question #34: Read two or three of the passages referenced above. For each one that you read, describe how God's control over the events of history is clearly affirmed. _____

The Old Testament is literally riddled with accounts of *concurrency* i.e., examples of God's constant cooperation "with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do." **Scripture plainly declares** that God: (1) controls *the events of history* to achieve His own purpose and will; and (2) exercises His providence *over the nations themselves as well as the economic and religious systems of the world*. He is sovereign over the wise and the foolish, the strong and the weak.

Isaiah 40:22-25: ²²It is He who sits above the vault of the earth, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. ²³**He it is who reduces rulers to nothing, Who makes the judges of the earth meaningless.** ²⁴**Scarcely have they been planted, Scarcely have they been sown, Scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth, But He merely blows on them, and they wither, And the storm carries them away like stubble.** ²⁵"To whom then will you liken Me That I should be his equal?" says the Holy One.

Job 12:16-22: ¹⁶With Him are strength and sound wisdom, The misled and the misleader belong to Him. ¹⁷He makes counselors walk barefoot, And makes fools of judges. ¹⁸**He loosens the bond of kings, And binds their loins with a girdle.** ¹⁹**He makes priests walk barefoot, And overthrows the secure ones.** ²⁰He deprives the trusted ones of speech, And takes away the discernment of the elders. ²¹He pours contempt on nobles, And loosens the belt of the strong. ²²He reveals mysteries from the darkness, And brings the deep darkness into light. ²³**He makes the nations great, then destroys them; He enlarges the nations, then leads them away.** ²⁴He deprives of intelligence the chiefs of the earth's people, And makes them wander in a pathless waste. ²⁵They grope in darkness with no light, And He makes them stagger like a drunken man.

Romans 11:32: For **God has shut up all in disobedience** that He might show mercy to all.

Psalms 22:28: For the kingdom is the LORD's, And **He rules over the nations.**

Psalms 82:8: Arise, O God, judge the earth! **For it is Thou who dost possess all the nations.**

Psalms 47:7-8: ⁷For God is the King of all the earth; Sing praises with a skillful psalm.

⁸**God reigns over the nations, God sits on His holy throne.**

Here we have irrefutable testimony that *God is Sovereign over the nations of the earth!* These passages affirm that when a nation becomes great and powerful, it is God's doing. They affirm that when a nation is destroyed, it is God's doing. Even the spiritual darkness of the nations is said to be God's doing. All the nations belong to Him. They exist for His purposes and His good pleasure. The **Old Testament plainly declares** that God providentially directs the rise and fall of nations and is constantly directing the affairs of human history.

Question #35: From the verses quoted above, describe several examples of *concurrency*. _____

Question #36: How do these examples of concurrence encourage and comfort you as situations in the world tempt you to be worried and fearful? _____

Many examples of God's control over the events of history can also be cited from the New Testament. Here are just a few:

1. From the life and ministry of Jesus Christ:

- **His virgin birth:** (Luke 1-3)
- **His calming of the raging sea:** (Matthew 8:23-27)
- **The lame walk:** (John 5:1-47, note in particular, vs 17, 19 & 30)
- **The blind see:** (John 9:1-41, note in particular, vs 3-5)
- **The dead live again:** (John 11:1-44, note in particular, vs. 4, 41-42)
- **His resurrection:** (Matthew 28:1-20, note in particular vs 2-7, 18-20)

2. From other places in the New Testament:

- **The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost:** (Acts 2:1-21)
- **Numerous signs and wonders done by the Apostles:** (throughout Acts)
- **Peter's deliverance from prison:** (Acts 12:1-11)
- **The conversion and calling of Saul of Tarsus:** (Acts 9:1-22)
- **The death of Herod:** (Acts 12:18-23)
- **The trumpet and bowl judgments:** (Revelation 7-11,16)
- **The Judgment of the Beast and the False Prophet:** (Revelation 19:19-21)

Question #37: Read two or three of the passages referenced above. For each one that you read, describe how God's control over the events of history is clearly affirmed. _____

The following passages specifically demonstrate how God mysteriously works in the free choices of men to accomplish His purposes.

Acts 2:22-24: ²²Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— ²³**this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.** ²⁴And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

Acts 4:27-28: ²⁷For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the

Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸**to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur.**

Question #38: In these two situations from Acts, how do you see **concurrency** at work? _____

The **New Testament plainly declares** and explicitly teaches that God is constantly directing all the affairs of human history.

Two Related Questions: *Does God cause or ordain evil?*
 Is everything that happens God's will?

Wayne Grudem, in his *Systematic Theology*, wisely answers the first question like this:

If God does indeed cause, through his providential activity, everything that comes about in the world, then the question arises, "What is the relationship between God and evil in the world?" Does God actually cause the evil actions that people do? If he does, then is God not responsible for sin?

In approaching this question, it is best first to read the passages of Scripture that directly address it. We can begin by looking at several passages that affirm that God did, indeed, cause evil events to come about and evil deeds to be done. But we must remember that in all these passages it is very clear that Scripture nowhere shows God as directly doing anything evil, but rather as bringing about evil deeds through the willing actions of moral creatures. Moreover, Scripture never blames God for evil or shows God as taking pleasure in evil, and Scripture never excuses human beings for the wrong they do. However we understand God's relationship to evil, we must never come to the point where we think that we are not responsible for the evil that we do, or that God takes pleasure in evil or is to be blamed for it. Such a conclusion is clearly contrary to Scripture.

There are literally dozens of Scripture passages that say that God (indirectly) brought about some kind of evil. I have quoted such an extensive list (in the next few paragraphs) because Christians often are unaware of the extent of this forthright teaching in Scripture. Yet it must be remembered that in all of these examples, the evil is actually done not by God but by people or demons who choose to do it.

A very clear example is found in the story of Joseph. Scripture clearly says that Joseph's brothers were wrongly jealous of him (Gen. 37:11), hated him (Gen. 37:4, 5, 8), wanted to kill him (Gen. 37:20), and did wrong when they cast him into a pit (Gen. 37:24) and then sold him into slavery in Egypt (Gen. 37:28). Yet later Joseph could say to his brothers, "God sent me before you to preserve life" (Gen. 45:5), and "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today" (Gen. 50:20). Here we have a combination of evil deeds brought about by sinful men who are rightly held accountable for their sin and the overriding providential control of God whereby God's own purposes were accomplished. Both are clearly affirmed.