

Study of the doctrine of Jesus Christ

Counsel of God.

Scripture refers to Divine providence as the counsel or the purpose of God.

Heb 6:17 Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath.

Rom 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Isa 46:10 I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.

Job 12:13 To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his.

Psalm 73:24 You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.

Isa 11:2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him--the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.

From these declarations, and there are many more in Scripture, it is evident that by the term providence we are to understand not only the knowledge of things present and future, but also the decree or will and effectual working of God. The word counsel comprehends an understanding or foreknowledge of things which are to be done. It also shows a will to cause the things foreknown to happen. Providence is not merely the bare fore-sight or fore-knowledge of God but it also includes the will of God.

Therefore, we conclude that God doesn't have an observant foreknowledge, but a creative foreknowledge. Nothing that God comprehends can fail to come to pass, and nothing can come to pass without God's knowledge and will to allow it. That is, if we assume that God would allow himself to be bound by time – something He created – having to peer into the future to determine the events of things to come.

When we speak of the counsel of God, we ought to look at those passages of Scripture that appears to contradict our understanding of God.

Let's read the following, which is a passage also found in 2 Chr 18 – and with which God's enemies have a field day because they do not understand the way in which God works.

1Ki 22:1-25 And three years passed without war between Aram (Syria) and Israel. ²And it came about in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel. ³Now the king of Israel said to his servants, "Do you know that Ramoth-

Study of the doctrine of Jesus Christ

gilead belongs to us, and we are still doing nothing to take it out of the hand of the king of Aram?" ⁴And he said to Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to battle at Ramoth-gilead?" And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses."

⁵Moreover, Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Please inquire first for the word of the LORD."

1Ki 22:6 Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, "Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle or shall I refrain?" And they said, "Go up, for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king."

⁷But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not yet a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of him?"

What kind of prophets were the 400 men, then?

⁸And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "

There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD, but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. He is Micaiah son of Imlah."

Ahab didn't try to correct Jehoshaphat, but immediately mentioned Micaiah – so he admitted that the 400 prophets were not of the Lord.

Jehoshaphat realized that something was amiss with the 400 prophets.

But Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say so." ⁹Then the king of Israel called an officer and said, "Bring quickly Micaiah son of Imlah."

1Ki 22:10 Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting each on his throne, arrayed in their robes, at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them.

¹¹Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made horns of iron for himself and said, "Thus says the LORD, 'With these you shall gore the Arameans until they are consumed.'" ¹²And all the prophets were prophesying thus, saying, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead and prosper, for the LORD will give it into the hand of the king."

All 400 men in unison praising the king and enticing him to go to war.

¹³Then the messenger who went to summon Micaiah spoke to him saying, "Behold now, the words of the prophets are uniformly favorable to the king. Please let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak favorably." ¹⁴But Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, what the LORD says to me, that I will speak."

Study of the doctrine of Jesus Christ

¹⁵When he came to the king, the king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we refrain?" And he answered him, "Go up and succeed, and the LORD will give it into the hand of the king."

Micaiah speaks in such a tone that the king realizes something is wrong with what Micaiah said and he rebukes him. Perhaps Ahab realized, like the other prophets, Micaiah didn't say "this says the Lord."

1Ki 22:16 Then the king said to him, "How many times must I adjure you to speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?"

He already expected Micaiah to prophesy "evil" because he knew that his actions were evil – he was an evil man.

But then Micaiah spoke the words of the Lord:

¹⁷So he said, "I saw all Israel Scattered on the mountains, Like sheep which have no shepherd. And the LORD said, 'These have no master. Let each of them return to his house in peace.'" ¹⁸Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?"

Ahab's conscience is getting the better of him.

1Ki 22:19 And Micaiah said, "Therefore, hear the word of the LORD. I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left. ²⁰"And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?'

And one said this while another said that. ²¹"Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.' ²²"And the LORD said to him, 'How?' And he said, 'I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' Then He said, 'You are to entice him and also prevail. Go and do so.'

1Ki 22:23 "Now therefore, behold, the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; and the LORD has proclaimed disaster against you."

First, it's a vision.

Second, it's a parable.

Just as there are advisors and counselors in a human court, so Micaiah here sketches a scene for the king in terms he can understand.

²⁴Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near and struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, "How did the Spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak to you?" ²⁵And Micaiah said, "Behold, you shall see on that day when you enter an inner room to hide yourself."

Study of the doctrine of Jesus Christ

God is most free

God had the power to have arranged his counsel otherwise, or to even have omitted it altogether, or to have accomplished things differently from what we see. But he decreed it as it is from everlasting, as was pleasing to himself, according to his immense wisdom, and goodness. He is indeed most free.

Psalm 115:3 Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.

Jer 18:6 "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel."

Psalm 135:6 The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths.

Dnl 4:35 All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: 'What have you done?'

God is unchangeable

Neither error nor change can occur with God. What he has once decreed from everlasting, that being most good and just, he wills everlastingly, and at length brings to pass.

Mal 3:6 I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.

1Sam 15:29 He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind.

Num 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

Ps 33:11 But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.

Prov 19:21 Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD'S purpose that prevails.

Once again, there are passages of Scripture that causes God's enemies to show their ignorance of God.

Gen 6:5, 6 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

Study of the doctrine of Jesus Christ

nâcham

naw-kham'

A primitive root; properly to sigh, that is, breathe strongly; by implication to be sorry, that is, (in a favorable sense) to pity, console or (reflexively) rue; or (unfavorably) to avenge (oneself): - comfort (self), ease [one's self], repent (-er, -ing, self). nâcham also is used in Gen 5:29 "give rest" (favorable: pity).

Gen 24:67: Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Gen 27:42 Esau is consoling himself concerning you by planning to kill you.

Gen 37:35 Then all his sons and daughters rose to comfort him.

Time of mourning; Change mind; Moved to pity (judg 2:18); regret (1Sam 15:11); The Lord relented (2Sam 24:16); Think better;

Does this mean that God 'repented' (as the KJV translated *nâcham*)? Or was he sorry that he created man as we would be sorry because we made a mistake?

No, of course not. God is *nâcham* at the site of all the sin and wickedness, which comes forth from that creature, which He made in his image. It grieves Him more than any man can imagine.

We ought to look at *nâcham* from a human perspective as well as from God's perspective.

Humans have regret for having done something finding later that they shouldn't have done it.

The Greek *metamelesthai* means to regret having done something; *metanoein* means to repent or to have a change of heart. Judas regretted (*metamelesthai*) having betrayed Christ but he did not repent (*metanoein*) from his action.

In the Old Testament, Gen 6:6, we find that God regretted (repented) having made man.

But God also says,

Jer 18:5-11 Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, ⁶"Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel. ⁷"At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; ⁸if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent (*nacham*) concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. ⁹"Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; ¹⁰if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better (*nacham*) of the good with which I had promised to

Study of the doctrine of Jesus Christ

bless it. ¹¹"So now then, speak to the men of Judah and against the inhabitants of Jerusalem saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "Behold, I am fashioning calamity against you and devising a plan against you. Oh, turn back, each of you from his evil way, and reform your ways and your deeds.'"

From God's perspective, there can be no repentance because God cannot be wrong the first time.

So, the expression that God regrets or repents means that He acts according to His eternal decree in the choices He puts before man.

Man obeys God and he will be blessed with life and prosperity; man disobeys and death and adversity will become his lot.

Deu 30:14 - 20 "But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it. ¹⁵"See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; ¹⁶in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it. ¹⁷"But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You will not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it. ¹⁹"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, ²⁰by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

This proves that God acts exactly according to his will and resolve without changing his mind or having regret as we understand regret.

It is man with his sin and wickedness who grieve God, the Holy Spirit, and it injures the holiness of God that man, having been created in His image, would act so wickedly against Him.

Isa 30:15 For thus the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said, "In repentance and rest you will be saved, In quietness and trust is your strength." But you were not willing,

Jer 5:3 O LORD, do not Your eyes look for truth? You have smitten them, But they did not weaken; You have consumed them, But they refused to take correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; They have refused to repent.

Study of the doctrine of Jesus Christ

Jer 6:16 Thus says the LORD, "Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good way is, and walk in it; And you will find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'

Jer 22:21 "I spoke to you in your prosperity; But you said, 'I will not listen!' This has been your practice from your youth, That you have not obeyed My voice.

Mat 23:37 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.

Perhaps the greatest misunderstanding about God's unchangeability is found in Moses' intercession for Israel in Exodus 32:11-14

Exo 32:11-14 Then Moses entreated the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹²"Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, 'With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind (nâcham) about doing harm to Your people. ¹³"Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'" ¹⁴So the LORD changed His mind (nâcham) about the harm which He said He would do to His people.

1Sa 15:29 "Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind."

We should not err by imagining the change of mind (nâcham) exercised here is like that found in the human context, where someone makes a decision only to find out later that it wasn't such a good decision and is compelled to change his mind.

Moses pleads with God to change his mind (human understanding of what has to happen) and then, after God saw Moses' earnest prayer, God caused to happen what He had decreed.

To believe otherwise is to assume that God depended on Moses to point out that His holiness is at stake, which is absurd. It was not about God but about Moses.

Read also about Jonah and Nineve, Hisikaiah.

James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Study of the doctrine of Jesus Christ

Psalm 106 gives us the clear answer. Man hasn't changed since the days of Moses. We still do these things. The LORD hears the cries of the believers and through the Holy Spirit gives them the gift of repentance.

Psalm 106:32-48 By the waters of Meribah they angered the LORD, and trouble came to Moses because of them ³³for they rebelled against the Spirit of God, and rash words came from Moses' lips. ³⁴They did not destroy the peoples as the LORD had commanded them ³⁵but they mingled with the nations and adopted their customs. ³⁶They worshiped their idols, which became a snare to them ³⁷They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons. ³⁸They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was desecrated by their blood. ³⁹They defiled themselves by what they did; by their deeds they prostituted themselves, ⁴⁰therefore, the LORD was angry with his people and abhorred his inheritance. ⁴¹He handed them over to the nations, and their foes ruled over them.

106:42 Their enemies oppressed them and subjected them to their power. ⁴³Many times he delivered them, but they were bent on rebellion and they wasted away in their sin. ⁴⁴But he took note of their distress when he heard their cry. ⁴⁵For their sake he remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented. ⁴⁶He caused them to be pitied by all who held them captive. ⁴⁷Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise. ⁴⁸Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Let all the people say, "Amen!" Praise the LORD!