

Episode #619 The Why Question 4: Does God Determine Everything?

I. One of the most difficult questions we must ask ourselves regarding God, life, and the world is the “why” question. We who believe that there is a God Who is all-good and all-loving and Who made the world must answer why then this world is such a terrible place and in such a mess.

II. Though Satan might be the one who brought calamity into the world of humanity, and though God might have created Satan for a good purpose from which Satan fell, yet still isn’t God ultimately responsible for what Satan does if God determines everything that happens?

- A. For many people, the idea that God determines everything that happens is more a matter of logic than Bible study.
- B. For others, it is viewed as a matter of bringing Him glory. It is called “God’s sovereignty.” We do not doubt that God is sovereign, but does this have to mean He ultimately controls everything that happens?
- C. As human beings with limited power to control what happens, it is easy for us to imagine that God, having all power, would want to control everything that happens.
- D. This view, while it seems nice as a theory, falls apart when we really take into consideration all the terrible, monstrous things that happen.
- E. The Bible picture of God, unlike this “logical” conclusion about Him, shows a God Who freely delegates authority to His creatures.

III. Does the Bible teach that God determines everything?

- A. Romans 11:36. “For out of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things.”
 1. Does this mean all is out of God, the good as well as the bad? Does this mean that God determines everything that comes to pass?
 2. John 8:44, I John 3:8. Some things are “out of” the devil.
 3. Are we failing to believe Romans 11:36? Or II Cor. 5:18, Ephesians 1:11?
 4. Everything hinges on the meaning of “all things.” Greek *pas* means “all.” The neuter of *pas* is *pan*. The accusative, singular, masculine form is *panta*, as is the nominative and accusative plural. The word *panta* occurs many times in the New Testament, but 37 times it is preceded by the definite article *ta*.
- B. Concordance of *ta panta*.
 1. Mark 4:11. *All things* come in parables.
 2. Romans 8:32. With Him also freely give us *all things*?
 3. Romans 11:36. Of Him and through Him and to Him are *all things*
 4. I Corinthians 8:6. The Father, of Whom are *all things*
 5. I Corinthians 8:6. Jesus Christ, through Whom are *all things*
 6. I Corinthians 11:12. But *all things* are from God
 7. I Corinthians 12:6. God Who works *all* in all.
 8. I Corinthians 12:19. And if they were *all* one member
 9. I Corinthians 15:27. He Who put *all things* under Him is excepted.
 10. I Corinthians 15:28. Now when *all things* are made subject to Him
 11. I Corinthians 15:28. Who put *all things* under Him
 12. II Corinthians 4:15. For *all things* are for your sakes
 13. II Corinthians 5:18. Now *all things* are of God
 14. Galatians 3:22. Scripture has confined *all* under sin
 15. Ephesians 1:10. Gather together in one *all things* in Christ
 16. Ephesians 1:11. Who works all things according to the counsel of His will

17. Ephesians 1:23. Him Who fills *all* in all. (Manuscripts differ)
18. Ephesians 3:9. Who created *all things* through Jesus Christ
19. Ephesians 4:10. That He might fill *all things*.
20. Ephesians 4:15. In *all things* into Him Who is the head
21. Ephesians 5:13. But *all things* that are exposed are made manifest
22. Philippians 3:8. I have suffered the loss of *all things*
23. Philippians 3:21. Is able even to subdue *all things* to Himself.
24. Colossians 1:16. For by Him *all things* were created
25. Colossians 1:16. *All things* were created through Him and for Him.
26. Colossians 1:17. And in Him *all things* consist.
27. Colossians 1:20. And by Him to reconcile *all things* to Himself
28. Colossians 3:8. But now you yourselves are to put off *all these*:
29. Colossians 3:11. But Christ is *all* and in all.
30. I Timothy 6:13. God Who gives life to *all things*
31. Hebrews 1:3. Upholding *all things* by the word of His power
32. Hebrews 2:8. For in that He put *all* in subjection under Him
33. Hebrews 2:8. We do not yet see *all things* put under Him
34. Hebrews 2:10. Him, for Whom are *all things*
35. Hebrews 2:10. And by Whom are *all things*
36. Revelation 4:11. For You created all things
37. Revelation 5:13. And *all* that are in them

C. In many ways a Pauline phrase: 1 in Mark, 29 in Paul, 5 in Hebrews, 2 in Revelation.

D. It is important to determine just what is meant by this phrase *ta panta*.

IV. *Ta panta* means things in context.

- A. One way to determine the meaning of a word or phrase is to find a passage in which the meaning is so clear it cannot be mistaken.
- B. Colossians 3:8 is such a passage. Literally translated, this would be, "But now you yourselves are to put off the all." Did Paul mean to put off the universe? No!
- C. "All these" is the correct translation. What is meant is right there after it in context: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.
- D. On the basis of this clear example we would argue that *ta panta* is a demonstrative expression, idiomatic in character, referring to something which has just been said or which is about to be mentioned. It can best be translated "all this" or "all these" depending on if the singular or plural fits best the context. It always refers to something in the immediate context, either right before or right after.

V. That *ta panta* is demonstrative, referring to something just mentioned or about to be mentioned, can be shown just as clearly in other passages. Philippians 3:8. *Panta* can be limited by context, but not necessarily. *Ta panta* is always limited by context. Paul has listed seven things that were gain to him. The things enumerated he has counted as loss for Christ.

VI. Conclusion: The idea that God exercises complete control over everything that happens is thought to bring Him glory, but it does not make sense when we bring all the ugly things in the world into consideration. It does not match with the Biblical picture of a God Who delegates control to His creatures. Several passages that use the phrase *ta panta* are brought into the mix to prove this. But a study of *ta panta* reveals that this phrase means certain things in context, not all things without exception. There are things that come out of Satan or out of the wicked hearts of men and not out of God. We cannot say that God controls everything.