The Bible Unpacked

Comprehensive Study Series

The Bible’s teaching compiled for established believers

Paul Mallison

7. God’s Sovereignty
7. God’s Sovereignty

Paul Mallison
The work of Paul Mallison in The Bible Unpacked is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. The Scripture translations used are not licensed under a Creative Commons license and have all rights reserved (cf. copyright notices below).

The material may be freely reproduced and distributed for non-commercial purposes. Permission must be obtained from the copyright owners of the Scripture translations before the material may be used commercially or freely distributed with changes to how verses of Scripture are used.


Scripture quotations marked “ESV” are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.


Scripture quotations marked “GW” are taken from God’s Word® Copyright 1995 God’s Word to the Nations. Used by permission of Baker Publishing Group. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked “ISV” are taken from the Holy Bible: International Standard Version®, Release 1.44. Copyright © 1996–2007 by The ISV Foundation of Fullerton, California USA. Used by permission of Davidson Press, LLC. All rights reserved internationally.

Scripture quotations marked “NCV™” are taken from the New Century Version® Copyright © 2005 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Quotations designated “NET” are from the NET Bible® copyright ©1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. http://www.bible.org/ All rights reserved. Scripture quoted by permission.

Scripture quotations marked “NKJV” are taken from The New King James Version / Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers., Copyright © 1982. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Quotations of short phrases from other Bible translations are on occasions included in comments on the verses. The copyright notices for these translations are given below.


Scripture quotations marked “NLT” are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked “NRSV” are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

This copy made: 4-Sep-21.
Contents

A Quick Word ............................................................................................................ iv
Suggestions for Study Groups .................................................................................... v

I. God’s Supreme Authority
   a) The L ORD Is God – the Only God .............................................................. 2
   b) God Reigns Supreme ....................................................................................... 4
   c) God Has Power over All Things ....................................................................... 6
   d) God Defeats His Enemies ................................................................................. 9
   e) God Fulfills His Plans ...................................................................................... 11

II. God’s Control over the World
    a) God Has Control over Evil ............................................................................. 16
    b) God Has Control over Nature ........................................................................ 19
    c) God Has Control over the Nations .................................................................. 22
    d) God Has Control over Each Person .................................................................. 25
    e) Addendum: God’s Early Dealings with Humankind ...................................... 27

Topics in This Series ................................................................................................. 31
The Seven Editions ..................................................................................................... 33
Persecuted Christians ............................................................................................... 34
A Quick Word

This series of studies aims to present a compilation of the Bible’s teachings in a clear and readable order. There are 40 booklets in the series, based on the 40 chapters of the book *The Bible Unpacked - Comprehensive Edition*. Each booklet has two sections, which can be used for two or more studies.

The material contains Bible verses. Before the verses are headings, which reflect what the verses say – in particular the parts of the verses in *italics*. The verses are sometimes followed by a comment.

The verses often have a brief introduction. Usually these state who is speaking and often who they are speaking to. Apart from God and Jesus Christ, the main speakers are:

- Moses – who lead the Israelites and taught them God’s laws;
- David – Israel’s greatest king who wrote many of the psalms, most of which are essentially prayers;
- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and other prophets – who spoke to the people of Israel on God’s behalf; and
- Paul, Peter, John and other leaders of the early church – who spoke to various groups and wrote letters to believers.

Much care has been taken in order to correctly interpret the verses. Nevertheless, if you encounter a verse that is used to teach something that is contrary to or goes beyond your understanding, assess its use by doing such things as: reading the passage it is from; and considering how its teaching fits in with Scripture as a whole (e.g. interpret OT teaching in the light of NT teaching).

For more information on *The Bible Unpacked* and free downloads, go to the website: [www.thebibleunpacked.net](http://www.thebibleunpacked.net).

**Users are asked to pray regularly for persecuted Christians** and, if possible, support them financially. These things can be done through organizations that provide aid to them and/or prayer notices, such as those listed under **Persecuted Christians**.

Paul Mallison
Suggestions for Study Groups

Preliminary matters:

- Beforehand the leader should: check the context of any verses they are not familiar with; and review the questions. If need be, they should compose questions more applicable to the group.

- Each person should have a Bible, for things such as checking a verse’s context. It would also be helpful to have Bible commentaries on hand.

- Pray before beginning the study. Ask God for help in understanding the meaning of the verses and to affect your lives through them. Also pray together at the end.

Doing the study:

- Ideally, read the material and answer the questions prior to the meeting. Then share answers and discuss any issues arising from the material in the meeting.

- Alternatively, read the material and answer the questions in the meeting – reading either aloud as a group or individually (prior to sharing answers). If reading as a group, try having one person read the headings, another read the verses and another read the comments. Additionally, a fourth person could read the Bible references.

General or concluding questions:

If time permits, conclude with one or more of the following questions:

- What is something that you either: did not know before; gained greater insight into; or needed reminding of?

- What verse would be helpful to memorize and bear in mind during the next week?

- In taking the verses seriously, is there anything you should change in: (a) how you relate to God and/or to other people; or (b) any other area of your life (e.g. attitudes, values or behavior)? If so, are there any specific steps you could take to do this?
I. God’s Supreme Authority

As the one and only God, God reigns supreme in the world. He has supreme power over all things. As such, God defeats his enemies and he fulfills his plans. A realization of this produces submission to and worship of the one and only God.
a) The LORD Is God – the Only God

Note that God stated that the “LORD” was the name by which he was to be known (cf. Ex 3:12–15).

The LORD is God

Ps 100:3a  Know that the LORD is God.  NCV™

2Sam 7:28a  Now, O sovereign LORD, you are the true God!  NET

The LORD is God of heaven and earth

Deut 4:39  Today realize and carefully consider that the LORD is God in heaven above and on earth below – there is no other!  NET

The LORD is God of all people

Jer 32:27a  I am the LORD, the God of all humankind.  NET

2Kj 19:15a  Hezekiah prayed before the LORD: “LORD God of Israel, who is enthroned on the cherubs! You alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth.  NET

The LORD is the true and living God . . .

Jer 10:10  The LORD is the only true God. He is the living God and the everlasting King. When he shows his anger the earth shakes. None of the nations can stand up to his fury.  NET

. . . He is the one and only God

Isa 45:21b–22  [God:] And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me. 22“Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.  ESV

God’s deeds show that he is the only God

Ps 86:10  [David:] For you are great and do amazing things. You alone are God.  NET
DEUT 32:39 [God:] See, I am the only God. There are no others. I kill, and I make alive. I wound, and I heal, and no one can rescue you from my power. GW

What right does God have to lay claim to being the God of heaven and earth – and of all people?

What evidence does the Bible give that the LORD is the only God?

How should God being the only God affect our attitudes and thoughts?

Pray for persecuted Christians
b) God Reigns Supreme

God reigns

Ps 96:10  Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns! The world is established, it cannot be moved. He judges the nations fairly.” NET

God rules over all – over all the earth

1Chr 29:11–12  O LORD, you are great, mighty, majestic, magnificent, glorious, and sovereign over all the sky and earth! You have dominion and exalt yourself as the ruler of all. 12 You are the source of wealth and honor; you rule over all. You possess strength and might to magnify and give strength to all. NET

Ps 47:2  For the sovereign LORD is awe-inspiring; he is the great king who rules the whole earth! NET

God rules over all nations and authorities

Ps 22:28  For the LORD is king and rules over the nations. NET

1Tim 6:15  The glorious God is the only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords. CEV

God will reign forever

Lam 5:19  But you, O LORD, reign forever; your throne endures from generation to generation. NET

God will impose his absolute rule on all

Rev 11:15–17  [John, describing a vision:] Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.” 16 Then the twenty-four elders who are seated on their thrones before God threw themselves down with their faces to the ground and worshiped God 17 with these words: “We give you thanks, Lord God, the All-Powerful, the one who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and begun to reign.” NET

The proclamation in v. 15 and the final phrase “have begun to reign” (v. 17) may mean that at this point God has begun to impose his rule
on all – the actualization of the kingdom (v. 15) implemented with the imposition of God’s great power (v. 17). Alternatively the past tense may be used here to indicate the certainty of God doing so in the future.

**Note: All things belong to God**

**1Chr 29:11** Greatness, power, splendor, glory, and majesty are yours, LORD, because *everything in heaven and on earth is yours*. GW

All things belong to God – as he made all things – and it is because of this that God has the right to his sovereignty over all things.

What makes you think that God reigns supreme in the world?

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Why does not God fully impose his absolute rule now?

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Write down at least a couple of phrases/clauses from the verses that you could use in a prayer of praise to God.

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
c) God Has Power over All Things

See also:
- b) God’s Power (): Ultimate Power, Ch. 1

God has power over the forces of evil

**Col 2:15** God stripped the spiritual rulers and powers of their authority. With the cross, he won the victory and showed the world that they were powerless. *NCV™*

**Rom 16:20** [Paul, to believers:] The God of peace will quickly crush Satan under your feet. *NET*

God has power over death, to raise the dead

**2Cor 1:9** [Paul, speaking of his trials:] Indeed we felt as if the sentence of death had been passed against us, so that we would not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead. *NET*

God has power over all aspects of nature, including: the earth; the skies; . . .

**Job 9:5–7** Without warning he moves mountains and in anger he destroys them. 6 God sends earthquakes and shakes the ground; he rocks the pillars that support the earth. 7 He can keep the sun from rising, and the stars from shining at night. *GNT*

. . . and the waters

**Ps 107:24–25, 29** They witnessed the acts of the LORD, his amazing feats on the deep water. 25 He gave the order for a windstorm, and it stirred up the waves of the sea. ... 29 He calmed the storm, and the waves grew silent. *NET*

God has power over nations . . .

**Dan 4:35** All who live on the earth are nothing compared to him. He does what he wishes with the heavenly armies and with those who live on earth. No one can hold back his power or say to him, ‘What did you do?’ *ISV*
HAB 3:6, 12  He [God] takes his battle position and shakes the earth; with a mere look he frightens the nations. The ancient mountains disintegrate; the primeval hills are flattened. He travels on the ancient roads. ... 12 You [God] furiously stomp on the earth, you angrily trample down the nations.  NET

This poetically portrays God’s vastly superior power over nations.

... God can destroy nations

ZEPH 3:6  [God:] I destroyed nations; their walled cities are in ruins. I turned their streets into ruins; no one passes through them. Their cities are desolate; no one lives there.  NET

HAG 2:22A  [God:] I will overthrow royal thrones and shatter the might of earthly kingdoms.  NET

God has power over rulers and can bring them down

ISA 40:23  He brings down powerful rulers and reduces them to nothing.  GNT

Choose a verse that impresses on you the supremacy of God’s power. Why did you choose it?

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

In what things on the world stage do you consider God’s overriding power to be evident?

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________
Paul speaks of not trusting in himself “but in God who raises the dead” (2Cor 1:9). Is there anything for which you need to stop relying on your own resources and trusting in the all-powerful God?

________________________________

________________________________

________________________________

________________________________

Pray for persecuted Christians
d) God Defeats His Enemies

No one can effectively oppose God . . .

**Job 23:13**  But he alone is God, and who can oppose him? God does as he pleases, ...  **CEV**

**Jer 49:19**  [**God:**] For there is no one like me, and there is no one who can call me to account. There is no ruler who can stand up against me.  **NET**

. . . The plans of God’s enemies cannot succeed against him

**Ps 21:11**  [**David, to God:**] Though they plan evil against you, though they devise mischief, they will not succeed.  **ESV**

**Prov 21:30**  There is no wisdom, understanding, or advice that can succeed against the **LORD**.  **NCV™**

God takes vengeance on his enemies

**Nah 1:2**  The **LORD** is a jealous and avenging God; the **LORD** is avenging and wrathful; the **LORD** takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies.  **ESV**

God repays his enemies for their deeds

**Isa 59:18**  The **LORD** will pay back his enemies for what they have done. He will show his anger to those who were against him; he will punish the people in faraway places as they deserve.  **NCV™**

God destroys his enemies

**Deut 7:10**  But he will pay back those people who hate him. He will destroy them, and he will not be slow to pay back those who hate him.  **NCV™**

**1Sam 2:10a**  The **LORD** shatters his adversaries; he thunders against them from the heavens. The **LORD** executes judgment to the ends of the earth.  **NET**
Who are God’s enemies and how do they oppose him?

With the Bible’s assurance that God’s enemies will be defeated, is there any situation in your society or in the world that you should view differently? If so, what situation and how should you view it differently?

What do you think of God being described as “jealous and avenging... and wrathful” (Nah 1:2)? Is there anything positive about this?

Pray for persecuted Christians
e) God Fulfills His Plans

God carries out his plans

ISA 14:24  The LORD who commands armies makes this solemn vow: “Be sure of this: Just as I have intended, so it will be; just as I have planned, it will happen. NET

God’s plans, which he fulfills, were determined long ago – from the beginning

ISA 25:1  [ISAIAH:] O LORD, you are my God! I will exalt you in praise, I will extol your fame. For you have done extraordinary things, and executed plans made long ago exactly as you decreed. NET

ISA 46:10  [GOD:] From the beginning I revealed the end. From long ago I told you things that had not yet happened, saying, “My plan will stand, and I’ll do everything I intended to do.” GW

When the time comes, God’s plans are promptly fulfilled

HAB 2:3  [GOD, to HABAKKUK:] For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay. ESV

The reference is to the fulfillment of a prophetic vision from God.

God does not change his plans . . .

NUM 23:19  God is not a human being, and he will not lie. He is not a human, and he does not change his mind. What he says he will do, he does. What he promises, he makes come true. NCV™

. . . though God may have reason to relent from something he proposed

ISA 38:1–5  In those days Hezekiah was stricken with a terminal illness. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz visited him and told him, “This is what the LORD says, ‘Give instructions to your household, for you are about to die; you will not get well.’” 2Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, 3“Please, LORD. Remember how I have served you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion, and how I have carried out your will.” Then Hezekiah wept bitterly. 4The LORD
told Isaiah, “Go and tell Hezekiah: ‘This is what the LORD God of your ancestor David says: “I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Look, I will add fifteen years to your life, ... NET

No one can thwart God’s plans . . .

ISA 14:27 Indeed, the LORD who commands armies has a plan, and who can possibly frustrate it? His hand is ready to strike, and who can possibly stop it? NET

. . . Nor can anyone alter what God does

ECCL 3:14 [A wise teacher:] I also know that whatever God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken away from it. God has made it this way, so that men will fear him. NET

Note that in such general usage, “men” contextually is intended to be inclusive of women.

God works everything for his plans

PROV 16:4 The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble. ESV

EPH 1:11 In him [Christ] we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ... ESV

These verses appear to indicate that God works all things that exist or occur for the fulfillment of his plans.

What plans has God carried out - in the world and/or in the lives of people you know?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
What reason/s would lead to God relenting from carrying out something he had proposed?

________________________________
________________________________
________________________________

In what way/s does the teaching on God’s plans give us hope?

________________________________
________________________________
________________________________

Pray for persecuted Christians
II. God’s Control over the World

God has power over everything. This includes control over evil powers, nature, the nations of the world and each person’s life. Comprehending this is vital to having a sound understanding of God and of his relationship to the world – including his relationship with ourselves.
a) God Has Control over Evil

See also:
- *But Satan can only tempt and afflict as God and Jesus Christ permit,*
  Ch. 5

**God exerts control over evil**

**GEN 31:7**  [JACOB, REFERRING TO HIS GREEDY UNCLE LABAN:] Yet he has cheated me and changed my wages ten times. *But God did not let him harm me.*  GNT

**1Cor 10:13**  [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] No temptation has overtaken you that is unusual for human beings. *But God is faithful, and he will not allow you to be tempted beyond your strength. Instead, along with the temptation he will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to endure it.*  ISV

God has control over and limits any temptation, whether it originates from Satan or from our own sinful nature. This is indicative of God’s control over evil.

**God can even use evil**

**1Sam 18:10a**  *The next day an evil spirit from God suddenly took control of Saul, and he raved in his house like a madman.*  GNT

It would appear that the evil spirit was sent by God as a punishment for disobedient King Saul.

**God can use evil to fulfill his plans and purposes**

**Acts 2:23**  [PETER, TO A CROWD LARGELY OF JEWS:] *Jesus was given to you, and with the help of those who don’t know the law, you put him to death by nailing him to a cross. But this was God’s plan which he had made long ago; he knew all this would happen.*  NCV™

**Rev 17:17**  *For God has put into their minds to carry out his purpose by making a decision to give their royal power to the beast until the words of God are fulfilled.*  NET

This speaks of kings or world powers of the end times cooperating with the beast or anti-Christ, to unwittingly accomplish God’s purpose.
God may use evil and wrongdoing to punish

**ISA 10:5-7** God says, “How terrible it will be for the king of Assyria. I use him like a rod to show my anger; in anger I use Assyria like a club. I send it to fight against a nation that is separated from God. I am angry with those people, so I command Assyria to fight against them, to take their wealth from them, to trample them down like dirt in the streets. But Assyria’s king doesn’t understand that I am using him; he doesn’t know he is a tool for me. He only wants to destroy other people and to defeat many nations. NCV™

Verse 7 shows the Assyrian king to have been wicked. Despite this God used him to punish the godlessness of other nations (vv. 5–6).

God may even use evil for the benefit of people

**GEN 50:20** [Joseph, to his brothers:] As for you, you meant to harm me, but God intended it for a good purpose, so he could preserve the lives of many people, as you can see this day. NET

**2 Cor 12:7-9** [Paul:] To keep me from becoming conceited because of the exceptional nature of these revelations, a thorn was given to me and placed in my body. It was Satan’s messenger to keep on tormenting me so that I would not become conceited. I pleaded with the Lord three times to take it away from me, but he has told me, “My grace is all you need, for my power is perfected in weakness.” Therefore, I will most happily boast about my weaknesses, so that the Messiah’s power may rest on me. ISV

God – or Christ – used Paul’s affliction, which apparently came from Satan, to both keep him from becoming conceited (v. 7) and make him receptive to Christ’s power working in him (v. 9).
Should the teaching that God has control over evil affect our perception of or the way we respond to events that are apparently evil? If so, how?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

How should the teaching that God has control over evil encourage us?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Do you have a “thorn” like Paul (cf. 2Cor 12:7–9) – a chronic affliction or perhaps an ongoing difficult situation in your life? In what way could God use it to benefit you or others – and/or to advance his kingdom?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Pray for persecuted Christians
b) God Has Control over Nature

See also:
- God Maintains Creation, Ch. 6
- God has power over all aspects of nature, including: the earth; the skies; . . . , p. 6
- . . . and the waters, p. 6

God directs nature

**Job 37:11–12**  He loads the clouds with moisture; he scatters his lightning through the clouds. 12 The clouds go round in circles, wheeling about according to his plans, to carry out all that he commands them over the face of the whole inhabited world.  

**Ps 147:15–18**  He sends his command through the earth; swiftly his order reaches its destination. 16 He sends the snow that is white like wool; he spreads the frost that is white like ashes. 17 He throws his hailstones like crumbs. Who can withstand the cold wind he sends? 18 He then orders it all to melt; he breathes on it, and the water flows.

Nature serves God

**Ps 104:4**  [A psalmist, to God:] The winds are your messengers, and flames of fire are your servants.  

The term “flames of fire” refers to lightning.

**Ps 119:91**  [A psalmist, to God:] To this day they stand by means of your rulings, for all things serve you.

God can control the elements of nature to bring plentiful provision . . .

**Joel 2:23b–24**  Citizens of Zion [Jerusalem], rejoice! Be glad because of what the LORD your God has done! For he has given to you the early rains as vindication. He has sent to you the rains – both the early and the late rains as formerly. 24 The threshing floors are full of grain; the vats overflow with fresh wine and olive oil.
and God can control nature so as to bring depravation

**HAG 1:10–11** [God, to his self-centered people:] This is why the sky has held back its dew and the earth its produce. Moreover, I have called for a drought that will affect the fields, the hill country, the grain, new wine, fresh olive oil, and everything that grows from the ground; it also will harm people, animals, and everything they produce.  

**God has control over all creatures**

**JER 27:6** [God, to various kings:] I have at this time placed all these nations of yours under the power of my servant, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. I have even made all the wild animals subject to him.  

**GEN 7:15–16A** Pairs of all creatures that have the breath of life came into the ark to Noah. Those that entered were male and female, just as God commanded him.

God caused two of every kind of creature to come to Noah, as God had said (cf. 6:19–20).

**God can even perform miracles of nature**

**JUDG 13:3, 24A** The Lord’s angelic messenger appeared to the woman and said to her, “You are infertile and childless, but you will conceive and have a son. ... Manoah’s wife gave birth to a son and named him Samson.

**1Ki 17:12–16** She [a widow] said, “As certainly as the Lord your God lives, I have no food, except for a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. Right now I am gathering a couple of sticks for a fire. Then I’m going home to make one final meal for my son and myself. After we have eaten that, we will die of starvation.” Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid. Go and do as you planned. But first make a small cake for me and bring it to me; then make something for yourself and your son. For this is what the Lord God of Israel says, ‘The jar of flour will not be empty and the jug of oil will not run out until the day the Lord makes it rain on the surface of the ground.’” She went and did as Elijah told her; there was always enough food for Elijah and for her and her family. The jar of flour was never empty and the jug of oil never ran out, just as the Lord had promised through Elijah.
7. II. God’s Control over the World

Is there anything that makes you conscious of God’s control over nature? If so, what and why?

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

What is one way that nature serves God or serves his purposes?

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

How might God use the worsening climatic conditions in the world today for his purposes?

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Pray for persecuted Christians
c) God Has Control over the Nations

God is in control of the nations

Ps 67:4  [A psalmist, to God:] Let foreigners rejoice and celebrate! For you execute justice among the nations, and govern the people living on earth. (Selah)  NET

Isa 14:26–27  [God:] This is the plan I have devised for the whole earth; my hand is ready to strike all the nations.” [Isaiah:] 27 Indeed, the LORD who commands armies has a plan, and who can possibly frustrate it? His hand is ready to strike, and who can possibly stop it?  NET

What God determines for the whole world does take place, for God “controls every nation” (CEV) – none can prevent him from implementing his purposes concerning them.

God has been in control of the nations throughout history

Acts 17:26  From one human being he created all races on earth and made them live throughout the whole earth. He himself fixed beforehand the exact times and the limits of the places where they would live.  GNT

God appoints times for events affecting the nations

Ps 75:2  God says, “At the appointed times, I judge fairly.”  NET

God’s judgment spoken of here may well primarily be judgment on the nations (cf. v. 3); it is at least inclusive of this. As such the verse speaks of God choosing the times for his judgments of nations – presumably primarily the times of their downfall.

Dan 11:27–29  The two kings will both plan to do evil. They will sit at the same table and tell lies. But they will not succeed, because the end must wait until the appointed time. 28 The northern king will return to his country with a lot of wealth. He will be determined to fight against the holy promise. He will take action and return to his own country. 29 “At the appointed time he will again invade the south, but this time will be different from the first.  GW

The kings referred to here are Ptolemy Philometor of Egypt and Antiochus IV Epiphanes, with the events concerned eventuating
around 170–168 B.C. In v. 27, “the end” seems to be speaking of the end of Antiochus’ plans to expand his dominion into Egypt.

**God has control over the outcome of conflicts between nations**

**PROV 21:31** You can get the horses ready for battle, but it is the LORD who gives the victory.  
**NCV™**

**God can thwart the plans of the nations**

**Ps 33:10** The LORD frustrates the decisions of the nations; he nullifies the plans of the peoples.  
**NET**

**God establishes all ruling authorities**

**ROM 13:1** Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except by God’s appointment, and the authorities that exist have been instituted by God.  
**NET**

**God has control over rulers . . .**

**PROV 21:1** The LORD can control a king’s mind as he controls a river; he can direct it as he pleases.  
**NCV™**

. . . **God can use rulers in order to accomplish his purposes**

**2Chr 36:22–23** In the first year that Cyrus of Persia was emperor, the LORD made what he had said through the prophet Jeremiah come true. He prompted Cyrus to issue the following command and send it out in writing to be read aloud everywhere in his empire: 23“This is the command of Cyrus, Emperor of Persia. The LORD, the God of Heaven, has made me ruler over the whole world and has given me the responsibility of building a temple for him in Jerusalem in Judah. Now, all of you who are God’s people, go there, and may the LORD your God be with you.”  
**GNT**
To what degree does God impose his control over the nations? What does he do?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

How should the teaching in this section influence our perception of world events?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Should Romans 13:1 (cf. God establishes all ruling authorities) affect how we respond to bad governing authorities? If so, how?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
d) God Has Control over Each Person

God has control over people’s hearts and minds

1 SAM 10:9a  When Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul’s heart. NCV™

EX 12:36  The LORD caused the Egyptians to think well of them, and the Egyptians gave the people everything they asked for. So the Israelites took rich gifts from them. NCV™

God has control over people’s actions . . .

DAN 5:23  [Daniel, to King Belshazzar:] But you have not glorified the God who has in his control your very breath and all your ways! NET

ECCL 9:1a  [A wise teacher:] In light of all of this, I committed myself to explain it this way: the righteous and the wise, along with everything they do, are in the hands of God. ISV

God has control over (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV) that which is said to be in his “hands”. Here this would encompass what the righteous actually do, along with the success and effect of these deeds.

. . . Despite people’s plans, their steps are directed by God

PROV 16:9  A person plans his course, but the LORD directs his steps. NET

God controls the good and bad things that happen to people

LAM 3:38  Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that everything comes – both calamity and blessing? NET

ECCL 7:14  In times of prosperity be joyful, but in times of adversity consider this: God has made one as well as the other, so that no one can discover what the future holds. NET

God determines the length of people’s lives . . .

JOB 14:5  [Job, to God:] Since man’s days are determined, the number of his months is under your control; you have set his limit and he cannot pass it. NET
Ps 139:16b [David, to God:] All the days ordained for me were recorded in your scroll before one of them came into existence. NET

... and God finishes people’s lives

Ps 90:3, 5a [A psalmist, to God:] At your command we die and turn back to dust, ... 5 You bring our lives to an end just like a dream. CEV

Note: The life of every person is in God’s hands

Job 12:10 The life of every living creature and the spirit in every human body are in his hands. GW

To what extent are people’s plans subject to God’s will?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Is every good and bad thing that happens to us caused by God? What part does God “play” in such things?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

How should we respond to the teaching that our lives and what we do are “in the hands of God” (Eccl 9:1a; cf. Job 12:10)?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
e) Addendum: God’s Early Dealings with Humankind

From the time he created the first people, God has ruled over them, exerting his authority and control when necessary – as evidenced throughout this section.

God’s creation of the first people, in an ideal environment

**Gen 2:7–10a** Then the *LORD* God formed the man from the dust of the earth and blew the breath of life into his nostrils. The man became a living being. 8 The *LORD* God planted a garden in Eden, in the east. That’s where he put the man whom he had formed. 9 The *LORD* God made all the trees grow out of the ground. These trees were nice to look at, and their fruit was good to eat. The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil grew in the middle of the garden. 10 A river flowed from Eden to water the garden. **GW**

**Gen 2:22–23** Then the *LORD* God formed a woman from the rib that he had taken from the man. He brought her to the man. 23 The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She will be named woman because she was taken from man.” **GW**

The man and the woman are of course Adam and Eve, who also are in view in the following subsection.

Humankind’s original sin . . .

**Gen 3:2–6** And the woman [Eve] said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” 4 But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. **ESV**

Note that generally Satan is understood to be behind the serpent’s action, speaking through the serpent.
. . . The judgment for sin – including death and expulsion from the Garden of Eden

**Gen 3:22–23** Then the LORD God said, “The man has become like one of us, since he knows good and evil. *He must not reach out and take the fruit from the tree of life and eat. Then he would live forever.*”

23 So the LORD God sent the man out of the Garden of Eden to farm the ground from which the man had been formed. **GW**

Verse 22 effectively speaks of the punishment of death (cf. v. 3), with people no longer able to eat from the tree of life and live forever.

The flood and Noah: Escalated sin and judgment; righteousness and salvation

**Gen 6:12–14, 17–19** God saw the earth, and indeed it was ruined, for all living creatures on the earth were sinful. 13 So God said to Noah, “I have decided that all living creatures must die, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. Now I am about to destroy them and the earth. 14 Make for yourself an ark of cypress wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it with pitch inside and out. … 17 I am about to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy from under the sky all the living creatures that have the breath of life in them. Everything that is on the earth will die, 18 but I will confirm my covenant with you. You will enter the ark – you, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you. 19 You must bring into the ark two of every kind of living creature from all flesh, male and female, to keep them alive with you. **NET**

**Gen 7:1, 23** The LORD said to Noah, “Go into the ship with your whole family because I have seen that you alone are righteous among the people of today. … 23 Every living creature on the face of the earth was wiped out. Humans, domestic animals, crawling creatures, and birds were wiped off the earth. Only Noah and those with him in the ship were left. **GW**

The Tower of Babel: Sinful pride and the dispersion of humankind

**Gen 11:1–9** The whole earth had a common language and a common vocabulary. 2 When the people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. 3 Then they said to one another, “Come,
let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” (They had brick instead of stone and tar instead of mortar.) Then they said, “Come, let’s build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens so that we may make a name for ourselves. Otherwise we will be scattered across the face of the entire earth.” But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the people had started building. And the LORD said, “If as one people all sharing a common language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be beyond them. Come, let’s go down and confuse their language so they won’t be able to understand each other.” So the LORD scattered them from there across the face of the entire earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why its name was called Babel – because there the LORD confused the language of the entire world, and from there the LORD scattered them across the face of the entire earth. 

Verse 4 suggests that human pride was behind the building of this tower, known as the Tower of Babel. With the people’s pride fuelling their aspirations and accomplishments, God would have foreseen the potential for self-reliance and rebellion against him. As such God confused their language (v. 7), so that they did not speak the same language (v. 6). Moreover – in direct contrast to the people’s second objective for the tower (v. 4b) – God scattered them throughout the earth (v. 9b).

Why was there an issue with people knowing good and evil (Gen 3:22)?
What does this section show us about God?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

What teaching or lessons in this section are particularly pertinent for us today?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Pray for persecuted Christians
# Topics in This Series

## Section I. What to Know

### Part A. God and Spiritual Powers

1. **God’s Being**  
   I. Basics  
   II. God’s Pre-Eminence

2. **God’s Character**  
   I. Holy Characteristics  
   II. Loving Characteristics

3. **Jesus Christ**  
   I. General  
   II. Jesus Christ and God

4. **The Holy Spirit**  
   I. General  
   II. God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

5. **Angels, Satan and Demons**  
   I. Angels  
   II. Satan and Demons

### Part B. God and the World: Basics

6. **God’s Creation**  
   I. General  
   II. God’s Creation of People

7. **God’s Sovereignty**  
   I. God’s Supreme Authority  
   II. God’s Control over the World

8. **God’s Word**  
   I. General  
   II. Key Old Testament Covenants

9. **The Problem of Sin**  
   I. General  
   II. The Law’s Provision for Israel’s Sin

10. **God’s Judgment**  
    I. Basics  
    II. The Manifestation of God’s Judgment

### Part C. God and the World: Jesus Christ

11. **God’s Promised Messiah**  
    I. The Messiah’s Identity  
    II. The Messiah’s Purpose and Person

12. **Jesus Christ’s Mission**  
    I. God’s Enablement of Jesus Christ  
    II. Ministry, Death and Resurrection

13. **Salvation through Jesus Christ**  
    I. Salvation from Sin  
    II. Salvation for the World

14. **The New Order**  
    I. Jesus Christ and the Law’s Diminished Role  
    II. Key Elements of the New Order

15. **‘The Last Things’**  
    I. Jesus Christ’s Return and the Judgment  
    II. The Afterlife

### Part D. God and His Own People

16. **The Standing of God’s People**  
    I. Basics  
    II. Being ‘in’ Jesus Christ

17. **Keys to God’s Interaction**  
    I. Basics  
    II. God’s Holy Spirit in His People

18. **God’s Transformation of His People**  
    I. General  
    II. Spiritual Attributes

19. **God’s Care of His People**  
    I. God’s Saving of His People  
    II. God’s Preservation of His People

20. **God’s Plans for His People**  
    I. General  
    II. God’s Plans for Israel
Section II. What to Do

Part E. Relating to God

21. Being Right with God
   I. Getting Right with God
   II. Staying Right with God

22. Having Faith in God
   I. Faith and Hope
   II. What Not to Do

23. Loving, Fearing and Obeying God
   I. Loving and Fearing God
   II. Obeying God

24. Connecting with God
   I. Being Close to God
   II. Praying to God

25. Exalting God
   I. Instructions
   II. Reasons to Exalt God

Part F. Church Life

26. Being One Body
   I. General
   II. Caring for the Body

27. Worshiping God
   I. General
   II. Offerings

28. Serving God
   I. Preliminary Instructions and Insights
   II. Doing God’s Work

29. Significant Practices
   I. Symbolic Rites
   II. Other Significant Practices

30. Church Leadership
   I. General
   II. Teaching in the Church

Part G. Relating to People

31. Love
   I. Loving Qualities
   II. Antitheses of Love

32. Justice
   I. Justice in Action
   II. Being True

33. Wisdom
   I. Being Wise
   II. Antitheses of Wisdom and Knowledge

34. Common Relationships
   I. Family Relationships
   II. Civil Relationships

35. Spreading the Gospel
   I. Instructions
   II. Insights

Part H. Persevering

36. Standing Firm
   I. General
   II. Spiritual Warfare

37. Rejecting Sin
   I. Encountering Sin
   II. Avoiding Sin and Being Holy

38. Major Pitfalls
   I. Pride
   II. Riches and Sex

39. Hard Times
   I. General
   II. Praying in Hard Times

40. Persecution
   I. The Persecution of God’s People
   II. What to Do in Persecution
The Seven Editions

There are seven editions of *The Bible Unpacked*, as shown below. Each edition is an abbreviated version of the next one. Four of the editions have studies based on them, with the same text and questions added. For more details and free downloads, go to [www.thebibleunpacked.net](http://www.thebibleunpacked.net).

**Two-Minute Edition** – *Key Bible teachings for everyone.* For giving to non-Christians.

**Pocket Edition** – *Key Bible teachings for seekers of truth.* Largely for giving to inquiring non-Christians or young new Christians.

**Concise Edition** – *Key Bible teachings for new believers.* For either new or young Christians. Suitable to give to non-Christian friends. Has study series based on it.

**Foundations Edition** – *The Bible’s teaching condensed for young believers.* For newer Christians. Study series is ideal for studies with newer believers.

**Intermediate Edition** – *The Bible’s teaching summarized for growing believers.* For developing a sound understanding of the faith. Studies are excellent for Bible study groups.

**Comprehensive Edition** – *The Bible’s teaching compiled for established believers.* For a more comprehensive knowledge of the faith. Studies are ideal for studying topics in detail.

**In-Depth Edition** – *The Bible’s teaching expounded for Bible students.* For pastors, church leaders, Bible students and all who want a deep understanding of the faith. Available in a single pdf file with some 100,000 hyperlinks.
Persecuted Christians

Over 200 million Christians in at least 60 countries are denied basic human rights solely because of their faith. (Source: World Evangelical Alliance) Every year many Christians are killed because of their faith.

Through prayer, encouragement and practical assistance we can assist and fellowship with persecuted Christians in their suffering. You can play a vital part in this through contacting one of the organizations listed below. Most produce regular news/prayer letters.

**Barnabas Fund** – [www.barnabasfund.org](http://www.barnabasfund.org)
It provides material and spiritual support based on locally identified needs.

**Christian Solidarity International** – [csi-usa.org](http://csi-usa.org)
CSI works to defend religious liberty and help persecuted Christians.

**Christian Solidarity Worldwide** – [www.csw.org.uk](http://www.csw.org.uk)
It advocates for freedom of religion and justice for persecuted believers.

**Open Doors** – [www.opendoors.org; www.opendoors.org.au](http://www.opendoors.org)
It equips believers for persecution and maintaining a witness to the Gospel.

**Religious Liberty Commission** – [www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc](http://www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc)
RLC defends and aids persecuted Christians. See also [www.idop.org](http://www.idop.org).

**Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin** – [rlprayerbulletin.blogspot.com](http://rlprayerbulletin.blogspot.com)
This site provides weekly prayer bulletins.

It supplies Bibles to persecuted Christians and provides training.

**Voice of the Martyrs** – [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com)
VOM helps persecuted Christians spread the gospel. It also gives material aid.

**World Watch Monitor** – [www.worldwatchmonitor.org](http://www.worldwatchmonitor.org)
It reports the story of Christians under pressure for their faith.

*Then the King will answer, ‘I tell you the truth, anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me.’* Matthew 25:40 NCV
This series of studies is based on the *Comprehensive Edition of The Bible Unpacked*.

There are seven editions of *The Bible Unpacked*. These aim to address the needs of non-Christian through to mature Christians, from teenagers to adults.

For more information and free downloads go to: [www.thebibleunpacked.net](http://www.thebibleunpacked.net)