

Destiny, Karma, & How Life Works

Timothy Williams 2016-05-15

What is going to happen tomorrow? Is tomorrow already set? Is your destiny determined and your fate decided? Will karma work in your favor or will it punish you?

Does everything happen for a purpose – implying that it was all orchestrated by God? Or are you in control? Where does free will come into play? If God doesn't orchestrate everything, how and where does he get involved?

These are questions that many misunderstand or simply can't answer at all, yet how we view the answers has a great impact on how we approach life.

I have heard many Christians say, and regularly see memes on Facebook saying, "Everything happens for a purpose." "It was meant to be." "It's God's will." I have seen memes and comments about something bad happening to a bad person being karma.

What do these words mean to the Christian? We must take a Biblical approach to the subject in order to approach life properly.

DESTINY

- Something that is to happen or has happened to a particular person or thing; their lot or fortune.
- The predetermined, usually inevitable or irresistible, course of events.

"he believes in destiny" "master of his own destiny" "she believed their meeting was destiny" Also: fate, providence; predestination; God's will, kismet, the stars; luck, fortune, chance; karma, serendipity

FATE

The development of events beyond a person's control, sometimes regarded as determined by a supernatural power. "Fate decided his course for him" "what has fate in store for me?" "Fate decreed that they would never meet again." synonyms: future, destiny, outcome, end, lot

Destiny and fate can be defined as what is going to happen with some elements within our control and some not. But it can also be defined as the inescapable predetermined future in which you have very little or no say. Two very different views on life.

I would agree that it is our destiny to die, our fate is sealed in this instance. We all have a fate in store for us. However, some of it is within our control.

KARMA

From Hinduism, Buddhism. Action, seen as bringing upon oneself inevitable results, good or bad, either in this life or in a reincarnation: The hindu/Buddhist belief that whatever you do comes back to you, e.g. if you do something good, something good will happen to you, and vice versa. Informal: destiny or fate, the belief that all of your actions will have equal repercussions, affecting you.

The key to karma is that there is a perceived balance to good and bad in the universe and people who do bad things will be paid back by karma at some point in the future. The original concept in Hinduism is that it would be paid back in either this life or a future reincarnated life. However, the popular view today is that you will “get yours” sometime in this life and it is simply a matter of waiting and watching.

We will shortly see that this is not Biblical.

EVERYTHING HAPPENS FOR A REASON

This is a popular saying described in the dictionary as an American Proverb and some Christians believe that God is orchestrating every detail of our existence.

Does everything happen for a reason? The short answer is... No. The idea that everything has a positive or good reason, or has been orchestrated, comes, I believe, from a popular misunderstanding of providence – God’s actions in the world – and a misunderstanding of scripture.

HOW DOES EVERYTHING WORK IF EVERYTHING ISN'T ORCHESTRATED AHEAD OF TIME?

DESTINY & FATE

We do face certainties in life that are inescapable such as death and judgment, but everything isn't preset. Most of the instruction in the NT clearly shows that we have choices to make that will determine our destiny.

Galatians 6:7-8

7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8 Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.



Karma doesn't exist, but, as a general principle, our actions have consequences. However, frequently people escape consequences while others have bad things happen without reason.

Ecclesiastes 8:14-15

14 There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: the righteous who get what the wicked deserve, and the wicked who get what the righteous deserve. This too, I say, is meaningless.

So much for karma.

There are 7.4 BILLION PEOPLE ON THIS EARTH WITH FREE WILL!

Romans 2:6-8 NIV

⁶ God "will repay each person according to what they have done."^[a] ⁷ To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. ⁸ But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.

This is true for all 7.4 billion people... including you! God isn't going to intervene and stop you or anyone else. If he did you wouldn't be you.

There is a popular meme on social media that twists this proverb and says: "Everything happens for a reason. But sometimes the reason is you're stupid and make bad decisions."



While humorous and a bit rude, it speaks much truth. God lets us all make decisions that impact ourselves and others both for the good and the bad. He allows this free will for everyone on the planet and this shapes the world each and every day.

TIME AND CHANCE HAPPEN TO THEM ALL!

Ecclesiastes 9:11-12

I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all.

12 Moreover, no one knows when their hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so people are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them.

God is in control. But God does not orchestrate every detail. He uses every detail to his purposes.

God allows what he has created to operate under the rules of nature. God allows both time and chance to take their course.

GOD'S WILL AND PLAN

God does remain in control. It is his creation.

Ephesians 1:3-5

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he[a] predestined us for adoption to sonship[b] through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his **pleasure and will**—

God does have a plan and he is in control!

Philippians 2:12-13

¹² Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you **to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose**.

God designed and created everything. He watches everything and he knows everything. God has a plan and will ensure that events work toward that plan. He can do this without negating free will and while allowing nature and chance to take their course.

PRAYER

God intervenes in the world to work his will, but also cares for and listens to us!!

Philippians 4:6-7

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Of course we must believe in God and believe he will actually answer our prayers!

James 1:4-7

⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. ⁶ But when you ask, **you must believe and not doubt**, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

Don't limit God! Trust what he says. But we also know that God is not always going to say yes.

HOW DOES ALL THIS WORK?

Destiny, free will, chance, God's plans, prayer...

How does this all work together? How do we tell what is chance and what is God? What is free will and what is answered prayer?!

I have no idea! We don't know, we won't know. How this works cannot be understood! If someone says they do understand, don't listen to them.

Ecclesiastes 8:16-17

¹⁶ When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe the labor that is done on earth—people getting no sleep day or night— ¹⁷ then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all their efforts to search it out, no one can discover its meaning. Even if the wise claim they know, they cannot really comprehend it.

We will never understand this life in this life. We can only trust God.

APPARENT UNFAIRNESS

The apparent injustice of the world can weigh us down. David described in Psalm 73 how he almost fell into sin and gave up because he saw evil prosper and didn't understand. Yet he finally realized he just needed to hold on to God...

Psalm 73:21-26

²¹ When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, ²² I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you. ²³ Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. ²⁴ You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. ²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. ²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

We cannot understand life, don't bother trying. Just keep on living and loving and trusting God. We must hold on to God even in the worst of circumstances.

Habakkuk 3:17-18

Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, ¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. ¹⁹ The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights.

WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN TOMORROW? WHAT IS YOUR DESTINY?

The real answer is that God's good plans for us are not here. He wants to give us good things here and now, and does, but there are no guarantees in this life because he is working for eternity where it really matters.

We must trust God and his promises even though we don't understand everything.

Ecclesiastes 7:13-14

¹³ Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked?

¹⁴ When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider this: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, no one can discover anything about their future.

We can, regardless of what happens in life, know that God will use it all for our good no matter what happens or why it happens.

Romans 8:28-32

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who^[i] have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

We must persevere even though we don't understand either the good or the bad that happens in life. Because we have hope in Christ.

Hebrews 10:19-25

A Call to Persevere in Faith

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

²³ Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:36-39 PERSEVERE – IN JUST A LITTLE WHILE...

³⁶ You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. ³⁷ For, “In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay.”^[f] ³⁸ And, “But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.”^[h] ³⁹ But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.

What is coming is worth all the trouble even though we don't understand everything that is happening. So I cannot tell you what is going to happen tomorrow. And when it happens I won't be able to tell you exactly why. If Solomon couldn't, none of us can!

But I can tell you that God loves you. God wants good things for you. And God desperately wants to give you an eternity of love. Are you going to stay faithful to the end through whatever may happen tomorrow and accept it?

Don't rely on karma and other made-up ideas. Rely on God, help and encourage each other, return to God if you've strayed, or put on Christ on if you haven't yet. If you want to know more or have any needs, come to the back to the elders as we stand and sing.