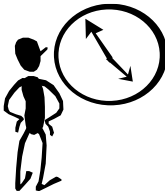


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m.

Every other Sunday night:

Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

God's Providence

By Ken Green

J. W. McGarvey, the great Restoration preacher and scholar of the 19th century, published two sermons on providence. One was based on the Genesis account of Joseph. The other was based on the book of Esther. Both narratives are permeated with the amazing and mysterious providence of God.

The dictionary defines providence as “exercising foresight; divine guidance or care; intervention.” Read the Book with that in mind!

Why and how was Esther, a Jewish girl, chosen Miss Persia from a field of beauties from 127 provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia? Why and how was Mordecai's ear in hearing distance of an assassination plot by two of the king's officers? Why and how was King Ahasuerus sleepless on that particular night? Why did he call to hear that very book of the chronicles read? How was the page turned to that exact entry that described Mordecai's intervention that saved the king's life? Was all that coincidental or was it by design?

When Joseph stood at the head of Egyptian affairs, and his brothers had acknowledged their wrongdoing, he said the Lord had sent him there. But consider the chain of events: Jacob wanted to know of his sons' welfare. Why did he send Joseph? There were servants. Joseph's approach reminded his brothers of his annoying dreams and being filled with rage, they threw him into a pit and planned to kill him after lunch.

Some Ishmaelites passed by. Why there? Why then? Why heading to Egypt? Why did Potiphar purchase Joseph? Why was he imprisoned rather than executed for the charge made against him by Potiphar's wife? Why were Pharaoh's butler and baker imprisoned at that same time? Why did they dream? Why did Pharaoh dream?

The skeptic will say all was happenstance. I say that every incident led to the result. Joseph said it was of God. God is as much the God of little things as the God of big things. Recall that Jesus said the very hairs of our heads are numbered. The providence of God is as much in the minutest details as in the completed whole.

“The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord” (Proverbs 16: 33). God will have the final say.

Something else to observe: God’s providence is punctual. Read the story of the evangelist Philip. He left Samaria at the angel’s bidding and traveled *“toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza” (Acts 8:26)*. Meanwhile, the *“man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority”* (had left Jerusalem) and *“was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet” (Acts 8: 27-28)*. Only God could have arranged the schedule. The rest is history.

The unbeliever will call it fate. Fate is blind. Providence has eyes. Providence is *“all things working together for good for them who love God” (Romans 8:28)*. We are not born under a lucky or an unlucky star. We can live and travel under *“the bright and morning star.”*

Even the thoughts of men are under the sovereignty of God. It was the foreordained and announced purpose of God that Jesus should be born at the appointed time in Bethlehem of Judea. But Mary lived in Nazareth, in the north, and her time had nearly arrived.

Then Caesar took a whim to tax the world. He ordered that each should enroll in the city of his family descent. Mary was obliged to make the trip with her betrothed husband. When? Luke tells us when: *“So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered” (Luke 2: 6)*.

We want to see through providence. But it can’t be done. We want to see why that affliction came and how it can possibly bring good to us. We want to understand why we must endure that particular burden. But no, it just cannot be done.

But we can believe. We can endure in faith. We can honor God by trusting in Him.

What Is Your Life?

By Fanning Yater Tant (1908-1997), 1955

“The days of our years are threescore years and ten, Or even by reason of strength fourscore years; Yet is their pride but labor and sorrow; For it is soon gone, and we fly away” (Psalm 90:10).

“What is your life? For ye are a vapor, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away” (James 4:14).

These Bible questions bring into focus on life’s brevity. None can read such words without realizing how swift and certain is death’s approach for every one of us. All our earthly hopes and ambitions, plans, and fondest dreams will finally come to rest beneath a mound of dirt over which grass will grow for centuries after we have returned to dust. How futile to think we can build anything that will endure on this earth!

As I write these lines I sit beneath a mighty Douglas fir whose towering summit seems to reach the heavens. It’s age, I only guess, but I am certain there is no one living today who was alive when it began to grow. A few hours south are California’s giant redwoods, some of which were growing when Abraham left Ur of Chaldees (Genesis 11:31), and many were old trees when Jesus wept in Gethsemane. Amid such awesome works of God, frail man seems insignifi-

cant indeed.

Yet I shall live after the tallest tree shall have long since decayed. For by God's grace my life is not limited to the few, uncertain years of earth. The "days of my years" may be few, but the length of my life is beyond measure. I live for eternity, not for time. The God I serve is a God of the living, not of the dead (Matthew 22:32).

How then can I ignore God and put Him out of my life? Close my ears to His commandments? What is the thinking of those who stupidly bargain for this life at the cost of eternal life? "For what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

It is eternally true that "*a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.*" To such a man God said, "*Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?*" (Luke 12:20). Jesus added His comment: "*So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God*" (Luke 12:21).

It is calm as these lines are written. The beautiful Willamette Valley stretches before me endlessly. The rumbling log trucks, with their burden of giant logs, roll below. The Valley is peaceful under a perfect Oregon Summer day. Yet every person living is headed toward the inevitable Judgment Day. We shall all stand in the presence of that eternal judge, and shall be judged "*out of the things which are written in the books*" (Revelation 20:12). The faithful Christian, the cynic, the deceitful worker, the misguided zealot, the ignorant savage shall each receive his due portion. The final reckoning cannot be avoided or delayed. We shall be judged.

In view of life's brevity, and the certainty of judgment, what manner of persons should we be? "*Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, ...*" are the words used by Peter to impress us with our responsibility and our accountability (II Peter 3:11-12).

God's redemption plan is simple. By Christ's sacrifice He has made it possible for me to escape the awful punishment which is due for my sin. Believing in Christ, I repent from sin and am buried through baptism "unto the remission of" all sins. This brings me into a covenant relationship with God. It is then my task to live each day in the consciousness of that relationship, to "walk worthily of the calling" wherewith I have been called (Ephesians 4:1).

Business ventures, family troubles, political upheavals, personal problems — how trivial! There is only one problem before all of us: to live a life pleasing to God. Whether it is lived in riches or poverty, in political freedom or chains and slavery, in domestic felicity or loneliness, is relatively unimportant. If one walks with the Lord, in the full assurance of His favor, neither the flattery of friends nor the hatred of foes will count for much.

The days of our years are so few, so filled with duties and labors, that we should waste little time in thinking whether our actions please men or not. Do they please God? That is the one and only question to consider. If yes, then with confidence we can press on; if no, then we should tremble with terror until the situation is changed.

"What is your life?" Consider it; then let God's will rule your heart, and God's word direct your ways.

Esther

Esther 4:13-16

Introduction: This lesson is as much a lesson on the Lord's providence as it is on the book of Esther (Est. 4:13-16). Mordecai, Queen Esther's cousin and guardian, understood that if Esther did not act to save the Jews, God would still save His people from extinction, but there was no guarantee that anyone they knew would survive. Mordecai asked, *"Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"*

I. A man named Haman (Chapter 3)

A. An Agagite by the name of Haman had become such of favorite of King Ahasuerus that not only was he placed in the King's administration as the prime minister but a decree was issued that everyone in the kingdom was to pay homage to Haman by "bending the knee" when he passed by.

B. However, Mordecai refused to bend the knee for Haman.

C. Haman was so outraged he set his wrath against all Jews (Est. 3:5-6).

D. For Mordecai's insult, Haman goes to the king to have him unwittingly destroy all the Jews (Est. 3:8-10).

E. The decree was issued that in 11 months hence, on the 13th day of the 12th month, all Jews on earth would be slain (Est. 3:13).

II. The appeal

A. Mordecai insisted that she appeal to the king on behalf of her people (Est. 4:7-8). However, Esther was scared to address the king for fear of death. When Mordecai makes it clear she will die one way or the other she agrees to approach the king. *"I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!"* (Est. 4:17)

B. Three days later, Esther enters the Kings court uninvited. Not only did the king hold up his golden scepter but he permits her to make a request that he will grant (Est. 5:3). At this point, all she has to do is say, "O King, I want you to save my people." Instead, she invites the King and Haman to dinner.

C. At the dinner, the King again asks her to make a request up to half the kingdom. Again, she hesitates and invites them to dinner the next night.

III. The next 24 hours

A. On the way home Haman sees Mordecai. Again, Mordecai does not bow to him. Haman is outraged. He calls his wife and friends to recite his greatness in wealth, in his family and in his service to the king. Yet, one thing was not right to him (Est. 5:12-13). The solution to Haman's problem was simple to his wife and friends (Est. 5:14).

B. That night the King couldn't sleep so he stays up all night having his chronicles read to him. When they come to the account where Mordecai had earlier foiled an attempt on the King's life, the King determines to officially thank Mordecai.

C. While the King is thinking how to honor Mordecai for his good deed, Haman comes in early to request permission to have Mordecai hung. But before Haman has a chance to ask, the king wants Haman's advice (Est. 6:6-10).

D. Haman returns home mortified. He tells his wife and friends all that happened (Est. 6:13). Their response, Haman would "*surely fall before him.*"

IV. The main course

A. At the banquet, the King repeats for the third time for her to make her request. The time had come for Esther to make her request (Est. 7:3-10).

B. Just as quick as Haman's life ended, Mordecai was lifted up to the vacant place that Haman left. As the new prime minister, Mordecai still had a problem. How does one undo a law that cannot be undone? By law the Jews were still scheduled to die on the 13th day of the 12th month.

C. Long story short, Mordecai issued a law ordering all Jews to take up arms in their own defense on the 13th day of the 12th month. If anyone tried to kill them, they were allowed to return the favor.

D. On that day, everyone that attempted to kill a Jew was killed himself.

V. God's Providence

A. How did Mordecai manage to become the prime minister with the ability to issue a law that would counteract the decree Haman had put out?

B. What would have happened if Haman had Mordecai executed before Esther worked up enough courage to make her appeal to the king?

C. What would have happened if Haman had arrived an hour earlier and before the king got to the account of how Mordecai saved the king's life in the chronicles?

D. What would have happened if the king was tired and slept through the night?

E. How did the king forget to honor Mordecai for saving his life? Seems very similar to the way the Butler forgot about Joseph in jail for two years.

F. What would have happened if Esther was too scared for her life to ask?

G. What are the odds that a Jewish girl would be queen of a foreign country and have the favor of the king to bring his wrath upon Haman and saved the Jewish race from extinction?

H. Was it coincidental that the young little orphan girl was more beautiful than all the ladies in the realm which propelled her to become queen?

I. Did God have anything to do with any of these events?

Conclusion: Likewise, is it just coincidental that you and I have become the persons we are today? I cannot believe that all the circumstances in our lives which shape, mold, direct and guide us when we were once crude and wicked coincidentally prepared us to be ready for the eternal harvest to come. Are all the things that happen in our lives accidents by mere chance? Or is it more reasonable to believe that the hand of God works in our lives today?

Changing the Book of Mormon and Other Mormon Absurdities

By Jefferson David Tant

One of the strange Mormon doctrines states that the reason for the dark skin of Negroes and Indians is that God cursed them as the result of sin. But as the result of these people being converted, their skin would lighten, and they would become a “**white** and delightsome people” (2 Nephi 30:6). Somehow, through the years, this just hasn’t worked out. So new editions of the Book of Mormon now read “... and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a **pure** and delightsome people.”

Mormons claim that the Bible has been changed and that we cannot rely upon it, while the Book of Mormon was given perfectly and no changes are needed. Of course, the knowledgeable person knows that literally thousands of changes have appeared in the Book of Mormon since it was first printed in March 1830. This change is but one of a continuing series and is the result of one of those “revelations of convenience.” Perhaps some of the “elders” that come to your door might be moved to proclaim their faith in the Book of Mormon “insofar as it is accurately translated.” They have used that line about the Bible till it is worn threadbare by now.

You possibly know that Joseph Smith taught the moon was populated by people about six feet tall who dressed like Quakers. Quakers dressed very simply, with the men wearing a simple vest, unadorned shirt, and a hat. Women wore a long dress, a cape, and a bonnet. Not to be outdone, Brigham Young taught there were people on the sun. “So it is with regard to the inhabitants of the sun. Do you think it is inhabited? I rather think it is. Do you think there is any life there? No question of it; it was not made in vain. It was made to give light to those who dwell upon it, and to other planets; and so will this earth when it is celestialized” (*Journal of Discourses*, 13:271).

As far back as 1837, I know that he [Joseph Smith] said the moon was inhabited by men and women the same as this earth, and that they lived to a greater age than we do -- that they live generally to near the age of a 1,000 years. He described the men as averaging nearly six feet in height and dressing quite uniformly in something near the Quaker style. (*Young Woman's Journal*, 1892 3: 263.)

Not only do humans have “pre-existent state” according to Mormonism, so do cucumbers and other vegetables. Hear Apostle Orson Pratt: “That vegetables have spirits is clearly shown from the fact that they have capacities for joy and rejoicing” (*The Seer*, p. 34). “When the world is redeemed, the vegetable creation is redeemed and made new... These spiritual vegetables are sent from Heaven to the terrestrial worlds, where, like animals, they take natural tabernacles... Thus the spirits of both vegetables and animals are the offspring of male and female parents which have been raised from the dead, or redeemed from a fallen condition, with the world upon which they dwelt” (*The Seer*, p. 38). So be careful with your next salad!