

PROVIDENCE

The miraculous age has ceased – “whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away” (1 Cor. 13:8-10). However, that does not mean that God is not alive and is not working in the lives of men today. The Bible teaches, “to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will” (Dan. 4:17). We also read of the general provisions necessary for life that God makes available – “for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Mat. 5:45).

The mistake many make is concluding that if God works in the lives of men today, then He must be working miraculously (i.e., Pentecostalism), or that if miracles have ceased, then God cannot work in the lives of men today at all (i.e., Deism). Both of these extremes are incorrect according to the Bible. Much of the confusion about providence begins with the question, “How does God do it?.” The answer to this may be simpler than it seems – “the secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deu. 30:1). God does not reveal unto us the “how,” regarding providence, but He does reveal unto us the fact of its existence. God does not tell us how He makes “things work together for good” (Rom. 8:28) to them that love Him, but He tells us in His Word that He can and He does. God does not reveal to us the “how,” regarding answers to prayer, but He does reveal that “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jam. 5:16). God, “according as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3). Since God has given us “all things that pertain unto life and godliness,” then the answer to “how,” regarding providence, is not necessary since He did not reveal it to us in His Holy Word. How presumptuous it is of man to think that he could even understand the “how,” in regards to providence, seeing that God chose not to provide that information.

To understand miracles and providence Scripturally, both must be properly defined and distinguished. Miracles were instantaneous – “so Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and *immediately* their eyes received sight” (Mat. 20:34, emphasis B.G.). Providence, on the other hand, may take a great deal of time before the result is evidenced. Consider the example of Joseph. Many years passed between the time his life was spared and he was sold into slavery until the time he was given a place of prominence in Egypt (Gen. 37-45). Another big distinction between miracles, which have ceased, and providence is the demonstration of each. Miracles were witnessed and easily certified. Even the enemies of Christ who, “beholding the man which was healed standing with them, *they could say nothing against it*. But when they had commanded them [*Peter and John*] to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we *cannot deny it*” (Acts 4:14-16, emphasis B.G.). In direct contrast, when Esther contemplated a right course of action, Mordecai gave her advice and then pondered, “who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Est. 4:14).

Our God, He is alive and He works in the lives of men today – not miraculously, but providentially. All men are blessed by the general provisions that God has made for us to live and

thrive here on Earth, but it should be our desire to seek those Spiritual blessings which are reserved only for those who are “in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). Through faith (Heb. 11:6) and obedience to God’s Word, repenting of past sins (Luke 13:3) and confessing the Deity of Christ (Rom. 10:9-10), one can be immersed in water to have his past sins forgiven and washed away (Acts 2:38; 22:16). God will then add you to His Church (Acts 2:47) where you can enjoy the Spiritual blessings of being in the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). Salvation can be found in no other (Acts 4:12). Let us seek to obey God and be faithful to Him even “unto death” so that we may be given “a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10).

- *Brad Green*