

Providence

Miracles

Sometimes the view we have of God's planning and creation is limited to our immediate wants, not our long term needs. In the short term we need food and shelter. In the long term, we need a home in heaven. Food and shelter protects the physical body which covers the soul and spirit during our sojourn here on earth. However, God is concerned with the needs of the spirit which will someday be freed from this earthly body and clothed in a heavenly body. Therefore God has made provisions for our temporary stay here while preparing us for the Home eternal with Him and His Son.

In six days God created everything needed to sustain our existence on planet earth until the end of time. His long range planning was perfect. *"God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food"* (Genesis 1:26-29). The Providence of God provided the physical environment and living creations that were declared to be "good" and continue to provide for us today.

An explanation of providence is necessary to understand how it applies to us. Providence begins with the word "provide" which basically means "to foresee." The corresponding Greek word, *prónoia*, means "forethought." The verb form *pronoio* "to take thought for," is translated "provide for" in 1 Timothy 5:8, Romans 12:17, 2 Corinthians 8:21. The Noun *pronoia* "forethought" is translated "providence" in Acts 24:2, and "provision" in Romans 13:14. To foresee and solve all future problems and needs implies a goal and a definite plan for attaining that goal. God's purpose was, is, and always will be to create people and make them worthy of living with Him for eternity. His providence makes procreation possible. His providence supplies food and shelter for the procreated beings. More importantly, He provides a means of salvation for them when sin enters their lives. He gave us a Bible to learn about Him (Romans 1:16-17), His plan of salvation, and the way to follow His son into eternal life.

The entire process of sustaining people, along with the animals, vegetables, and minerals on this earth, is seen in God's work in creation. He pronounced it "good" meaning that it satisfied everything He foresaw to keep the earth spinning, produce food and water where needed, and allow life to flourish. In His foreknowledge He also foresaw that everyone would sin and need a savior (Romans 3:23, 6:23). As the part of the plan to save people from their sins began, unforded, and spread through the gospel of Christ, a direct action was needed at times. To send Immanuel, Son of God and son of man to live on earth, God made a number of departures from nature and providence. These miracles occurred at strategic times in history.

Quite different from providence is the direct action of a "Miracle." In the scriptures, the word miracle describes an event outside of God's providence and the laws of nature. Rain and even floods are common natural events. But for the oceans to rise up and cover the earth, along with the rain, then return to their beds at His command, was a miracle in Noah's day (Psalms 104:6-9). By God's

providence, broken bones can be set, splinted, and healed. But for bones and muscles to appear and work where none had been since birth is a miracle (Acts 3:1-10). Throughout the Bible, we read of God doing things miraculously. The birth of a baby is providence and not a miracle. Even the sons born to Sarai (Genesis 21:2) and Hannah (1Samuel 1:20) were natural births. The hand of God may have assisted in the conception, but he used the natural way for the delivery. Only one human being was shaped directly from the dust of the earth, the first man, Adam; God fashioned Eve from one of Adam's ribs (Genesis 2:7, 22). The miracle occurred when God made Adam. Since then, the providence of God has been at work. The other miracle birth was Jesus, conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary, then, developed and birthed by a woman.

The Bible gives many examples of miracles in both testaments. When looking at the results of each miracle, it is easy to miss that each occurred for a specific reason in God's plan to save mankind. As His objectives reached completion, the need for Him to work through miracles ended. The constant providence of God remains today while miracles gradually ceased with the completion of the New Testament writings. I recommend a Family Talk Blog article "*Praying for Miracles, March 20, 2017, by Ryan Goodwin*" for more on this subject.