

PROVIDENCE AND SALVATION

Galatians 4:4

INTRODUCTION

- A. God's intentional will is for all of mankind to be saved. 1 Timothy 2:4
- B. Since mankind's sin, God has continued to work for that end.
- C. Let us look this morning at how God's providence can be seen in this work.

I. THE FULNESS OF TIME.

- A. God Sent His Son. Galatians 4:4
 - 1. At just the right time.
 - 2. With all the "just right" circumstances in place.
- B. Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians.
 - 1. Babylonians used by God to punish His people for idolatry.
 - 2. The forced exile produced a chastened and renewed remnant through which God was able to fulfill His promises concerning His coming kingdom and the Messiah, Jer. 24:6-7
 - a. Yes, they were apathetic, neglectful of the poor, sexually immoral, extortionists and guilty of vain worship.
 - b. Most Jews rebelled in unbelief against the Messiah, John 1:11.
 - c. But they never again turned to idols.
 - 3. While in captivity, they developed synagogues in which to worship and teach.
 - a. These were later used by Paul and other missionaries to spread the gospel.
- C. Alexander the Great.
 - 1. Alexander set out to improve the world.
 - a. He forced the adoption of the Greek language, culture, art and philosophy.
 - 2. It was during this time the kingdom of the Lord was established, as prophesied in Dan. 2:44 (40-43).
 - 3. Among other improvements during Alexander's rule, roads were built and protected by Roman soldiers, allowing safe and convenient travel.
 - 4. Many God-fearers were attracted to Jewish monotheism, providing a large pool of potential converts.
- D. It was the right time for Christ to be born, Colossians 1:6, 23.

II. HONEST SEEKERS FIND.

- A. Questions asked:
 - 1. If Jesus really is the resurrected Son of God, and
 - 2. If baptism really is essential to salvation, then
 - 3. Why are there so many intelligent people who can't see it?
 - 4. Answer: It is not IQ or intelligence that determines whether a person will understand and submit to the Lord.
- B. Words of Jesus.
 - 1. Matthew 5:3, 6
 - 2. John 7:17
 - 3. Promises to those who humble themselves.
 - 4. These promises imply that the providence of God will provide opportunities.

C. Examples.

1. Acts 8 – The Ethiopian Eunuch.
 - a. On the return trip from Jerusalem, reading Isaiah.
 - i. Hungering and thirsting...
 - b. Philip on foot – at just the right time.
 - c. The eunuch reading about the Messiah in Isa. 53:32-33.
 - d. A reminder: the treasure of the gospel entrusted to earthen vessels, 2 Cor. 4:7.
 - e. The Ethiopian converted.
2. Paul – preaching in Macedonia.
 - a. Acts 16:11-12
 - b. Setting a direct course (straight, Gr.) to Samothrace.
 - c. Typically the need to tack to get across a body of water (winds).
 - d. A **straight** course, due to providence? Perhaps!

D. An Earnest Seeker.

1. God promises he will find the truth, “...and that He is a rewarder of those who Diligently [earnestly] seek Him”, Hebrews 11:6.
2. By providence – they are brought into contact with you or me.
3. Important for us to take advantage of the opportunity provided.

III. PROVIDENCE OPENS DOORS.

A. Open Doors of Opportunity.

1. 1 Cor. 16:8-9
2. Door opened by another, undoubtedly God.
3. This does not mean the absence of obstacles.

B. Paul’s Report in Antioch.

1. They share of their great success on their journey, Acts 14:27.
2. God opening doors – providence.

C. Preaching in Rome.

1. Romans 1:15
 - a. Paul hindered from his visit. Rom. 15:19, 22-28
 - b. Based on a personal decision.
 - c. Providence opens doors, but does not dictate or coerce.
2. Paul eventually made his way to Rome, but not as a missionary, Acts 23:11.
3. Under God’s providential care, Paul was under “house arrest”, and was able to receive visitors.
 - a. Colossians 4:3, 18 – Paul’s prayer to open doors.
 - b. Acts 28:16 – guarded by Caesar’s imperial guards (Acts 12:3-4).
 - c. Phil. 1:12-13; 4:22

D. Open Doors – But a Personal Choice.

1. 2 Corinthians 2:12-13
 - a. Troas – open doors.
 - b. Out of concern for Titus – went to Macedonia.

CLOSING

- A. Intention for all to be saved. 2 Peter 3:9
- B. God does not force or coerce – the final choice is ours. Revelation 3:20