



Prayer

&

Providence

Lesson 11 – Providence and the Nations



Learning to Pray from the Psalms

Imprecatory Psalms

Psalms 35, 40, 58, 59, 69, 109, 140

- Ps 35:19 Let them not rejoice over me who are wrongfully my enemies; Nor let them wink with the eye who hate me without a cause.
- Ps 40:14 Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion Who seek to destroy my life; Let them be driven backward and brought to dishonor Who wish me evil.
- Ps 69:24 Pour out Your indignation upon them, And let Your wrathful anger take hold of them.
- Ps 109:30 I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth; Yes, I will praise Him among the multitude. 31 For He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, To save him from those who condemn him.



Providence and the Nations

- God had a purpose or plan for man's redemption if he sinned that was in His mind before time began
- He created a world which He could control to that end
- He created man unique from all other creatures with a free will
- In his foresight and forethought, He put in a motion a plan that would bring about man's redemption without violating the free will of man
- To bring about that plan and influence men toward that end, He has continuously acted providentially in this world



Gen. 12:2-3 “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Gen. 15:5 “Then He brought him outside and said, ‘Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’”

Gen. 15:13-14 “Then He said to Abram: ‘Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ‘And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.’”

Gen. 22:18 “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”



God and the Hebrew Nation

- “In order to fulfill these promises, Jehovah must control the destiny of both the descendants of Abraham and the nation in which they would sojourn whom they would serve.” (Homer Hailey)
- God’s providence then begins its work
 - **Through Israel’s time in Egypt**
 - **Throughout the entire Old Testament**
- We’ll notice two particular characters that bear this out quite remarkably:
 - **Joseph and Esther**
 - **Question: As we consider the providence of God and the Hebrew nation, the account of Joseph is an exceptional example of His providence at work. Note some of the non-miraculous, providential events through the life of Joseph.**

Coat of Many Colors
>> Brothers' Jealousy



Dreams
>> Brothers' Hatred



Cast into to pit to die
>> Traders pass by



Joseph sent to brothers
>> opportunity to act

Traders traveling south
>> Joseph taken to Egypt



Sold to Potiphar
>> Wife seduces & lies



Falsely accused
>> Imprisoned



Prisoners' dreams
>> Joseph forgotten



Pharaoh's dreams
>> Joseph interprets



Simeon held
>> Brothers return



Severe famine
>> Brothers go to Egypt

Famine continues
>> Brothers go again



Joseph revealed
>> Family moves to Egypt





“This is how providence works; God’s use of incidental events in the life of individuals or nations to accomplish His purpose. Nothing is without significance.” (Hailey)

Gen. 45:5-8 “But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.”

Gen. 50:19-20 “Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.’”



God and the Hebrew Nation

- Israel becomes a great nation in the promised land
- Both the land promise and the nation promise are fulfilled
- Go through periods of apostasy and repentance
- Ask for a king to lead them ... God relents and gives them a king
- Period of the kings leads to the division of Israel and finally their captivity
- First, the northern kingdom into Assyrian captivity
- Then, the southern kingdom into Babylonian captivity
- Eventually, the Jews find themselves under Persian rule, and this brings us to the book of Esther



Providence in the Life of Esther

- Ahasuerus, the Xerxes I of history, ruled the Persian Empire from 486 – 465 B.C
- During this period the story of Esther occurs
- Question: As the Old Testament progresses, God's providence continues to move His purpose along in the fulfillment of promises and prophecy. Another account we find with notable providential events is the story of Esther. Note some of these events from the book of Esther.
- Note: No reference to God is found in the book of Esther. Yet, the fingerprints of His great providence seem to be all over its pages.

Vashti refuses
>> She is deposed



Esther presented
>> Taken in by Hegai



Presented to King
>> Selected as queen



Wins Hegai's favor
>> Special treatment

Mordecai hears of plot
>> Recorded in chronicles



Haman promoted
>> Furious at Mordecai



Esther's appeal
>> King receives her



Haman's plot
>> Jews destruction decreed

Haman's pride
>> Gallows erected



Sleepless night, chronicles read
>> King learns of Mordecai's deed



Haman's honor
>> Given to Mordecai



Haman in the court
>> King asks about honoring

Esther reveals Haman's plot
>> King furious



Haman pleads
>> Hanged on gallows



Mordecai promoted
>> Jewish people saved





Providence in the Life of Esther

- God's providence was at work
- The Jewish people were saved once again through the actions of a few individuals and God's providence working through them
- God's purpose in bringing a Messiah through the Hebrew people continued to progress

God and Heathen Nations

“Another aspect of God’s providence in the moral realm which must be considered is His control and use of the heathen nations who continually strove to destroy the Jewish people and to overthrow Jehovah-worship. For unless God could control these in working out His purpose, the heathen nations would succeed in destroying the chosen people. Jehovah’s use, judgment, and destruction of them when they had served His purpose is a vital factor in the study of providence.”

Homer Hailey

Acts 17:26 “... And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings ...”





God and Heathen Nations

- In order for God to exercise His providential control, He must have the foresight and forethought necessary in allowing nations to develop, to flourish, and to cause their decline
 - Psa. 22:28 “For the kingdom is the LORD’S, and He rules over the nations.
 - Jer. 10:6-7 “Inasmuch as there is none like You, O LORD (You are great, and Your name is great in might), who would not fear You, O King of the nations? For this is Your rightful due. For among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like You.”
- By the providence of God, a people or nation exists until the spiritual or moral salt of righteousness is gone



God and Heathen Nations

- Amorites
 - **When God promised the land of Canaan for an inheritance to Abraham and his seed, He could not in justice and righteousness give it to him at that time**
 - **Gen. 15:13-15**
 - “... for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”
 - **400 years later, God cast them out of the land and gave it to Israel.**
 - 1 Kings 21:26 “... he behaved very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.”
- “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” (Prov. 14:34)
- “The wicked shall be turned into hell, And all the nations that forget God.” (Psa. 9:17)



God and Heathen Nations

- Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon
 - Dream of the golden image – he is the ‘head of gold’
 - Dan. 2:37 “You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory”
 - Dan. 4:17 “... In order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.”
 - Dan. 4:32 “And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.”



Egypt

- As the history of Israel plays out in the Old Testament, we see God using a number of heathen nations to fulfill His purposes. From the passages listed here, note some of these nations and how they were used in relation to Israel.
 - **Egypt a great nation**
 - **Israel flourishes there and becomes a great people**
 - **Kept separate within the land; did not mix with the people**
 - **Became enslaved by the Egyptians**
 - **Plagues influenced Pharaoh to let them go**
 - **Pharaoh and his army were destroyed**
- God was in control, as He worked through Moses, Pharaoh and the people of Egypt



*“The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand, a nation of fierce countenance, which does not respect the elderly nor show favor to the young.”
(Deut. 28:49-50)*



Assyria

- Israel eventually divides; northern kingdom becomes exceedingly idolatrous and wicked
- The Lord's longsuffering finally ran out
 - **Isa 10:5-7** “**Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, to seize the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.**”
- Once God's purpose was fulfilled, He directed His anger then at this wicked empire
 - **Isa 10:24-26** “**... the LORD of hosts will stir up a scourge for him like the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb; as His rod was on the sea, so will He lift it up in the manner of Egypt.**”



Babylon

- Judah became more and more corrupt and idolatrous
 - Hab. 1:1-4
 - Hab 1:5 “Look among the nations and watch - Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days which you would not believe, though it were told you. For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, a bitter and hasty nation which marches through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwelling places that are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful; their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves.”
- Surprised Habakkuk. How could God use such a wicked nation against His people?
 - They would be punished as well
 - Jer 50:17-18



Medo-Persia

- Jehovah raised up the Medes who combined forces with the Persians as the instrument of His judgment against Babylon
- Prophesied this many years before and who would lead them – Cyrus
 - Isa 13:1,17 “The burden against Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw ... Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, who will not regard silver; and as for gold, they will not delight in it.”
 - Isa 44:28 “Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," and to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid.'”
 - Jehovah used them to bring about His purpose even though Cyrus had no idea He was being used to do so – Isa. 45:4-5



Greco-Macedonia

- Daniel 8 – the vision that predicts the coming of the Grecian empire
- The Lord would use them under Alexander the Great to overthrow the Medo-Persian empire and usher in yet another empire
- Pivotal in preparing the time for the coming of Jesus, the Messiah
 - **Would bring an influence through the Greek language for the rapid spread of the gospel**
 - **And the Romans would follow and further enable the ‘fulness of time’ in which Messiah came forth (e.g. Roman road system)**



“Only one possessing infinite knowledge of His purpose, and infinite power to carry it out, could foretell and bring to pass such marvelous deeds as those foretold and accomplished in scripture. These demonstrate the providence – God’s forethought and foresight – in the creation whereby He could control His universe, its peoples and nations to accomplish His divine purpose and will. Possessing such control, He is able to answer the prayers of saints.”

Homer Hailey



Next Week – Lesson 12 – Providence and the Individual

1. The book of Ecclesiastes sets forth the vanity of life when viewed from a purely earthly standpoint. However, the name of God appears 40 times and provides an alternate viewpoint. Note the following passages and how they speak to God's provisions for man: Eccl. 2:24-26; 3:1-17; 4:6; 5:1-7; 5:18-20; 6:12; 7:13-14; 8:15-9:1; 9:7-10; 11:5; 12:13-14. Also, note Prov. 3:5-6.
2. Read Matthew 6:25-34. What does the word 'anxious' or 'worry' mean? (vv. 25,27,31,34). How much provision in your life does worry produce? What is the real answer for that provision? Note the Lord's illustrations that drive this point home. Also, note that the same word is found in Lk. 10:38-42 (v. 41); what is the 'good part' (v. 42)?
3. Paul's journey to Rome is another example of God's providence at work in an individual. Think about this final journey as well as what led up to it. Note some of the events that would seem to be providential. Acts 21-28
4. Consider James 5:13-18 as it relates to our discussion of providence.