

Lesson 10

PROVIDENCE

- I. **DEFINITION:** That work of God in which He preserves all His creatures, is active in all that happens in the world, and directs all things to their appointed end (Louis Berkhof). Creation is distinct from God yet always dependent upon God.
- II. **ELEMENTS OF PROVIDENCE**
 - A. **Preservation.** That continuous work of God by which He upholds all things. God's power upholds all things (Psa. 136:25; 145:15; Neh. 9:6; Acts 17:28; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3).
 - B. **Concurrence.** That work of God by which He co-operates with all His creatures and causes them to act precisely as they do. All secondary causes are real but these do not work independently of God. Both good and evil are under God's control but God never causes anyone to sin. There is a mystery we will never understand (Deut. 8:18; Psa. 104:20-21, 20; Amos 3:6; Matt. 5:45; 10:29; Acts 14:17; Phil. 2:12-13).
 - C. **Government.** Continued activity of God whereby He rules all things so that they carry out God's purpose through their own free actions (Psa. 103:19; Dan. 4:34-35; Matt. 10:29-31; Prov. 16:33; Gen. 50:20; Acts 14:16).
- III. **WRONG VIEWS OF PROVIDENCE**
 - A. **Deist.** God created the world, established its laws, set it in motion, and then withdrew from it. He wound it up like a clock, and now lets it run off. He may or may not interfere into the world if something goes wrong with its regular operation. Deists see God as far off (transcendent) and disconnected from the world.
 - B. **Pantheist.** Pantheism does not recognize the distinction between God and the world—the world and God are the same so this leaves no room for providence. God is near (imminent) but not far off.
 - C. **Dualist.** Dualism says that God and the material universe have eternally existed side by side; therefore, both are ultimate forces in the universe and it is impossible to know whether God or matter will win the eternal contest. Providence in this view sees the possibility that God could be defeated.
 - D. **Materialist.** The material universe is all there is—there is no God and no providence.
- IV. **MIRACLES AND PROVIDENCE (See notes on Miracles)**
 - A. A miracle is a supernatural work of God which is accomplished without the mediation of secondary causes.
 - B. A sovereign God who exists outside of His creation can set aside ordinary natural laws and intervene as He pleases (Num. 16:28; Jer. 32:20; John 2:11; 5:36).