

Study for the Month of March, 2011

The Field of Prophecy is the Theater of Providence

(Compared to the study: "Is Christ Uplifted in Revelation?")

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Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin (*farthing*, K.J.V.)? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows. Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. Matthew 10: 29-33, N.K.J.V.

Our study this month is based on the article of J.B. Cook entitled "The Doctrine of Providence" that appeared in *The Advent Review*, Part II, Nos. 1-5, 1850, pp. 7-13. Among other important points which are highlighted in this compilation and related comments, it shows that:

(1) many of the earliest believers coming from the Protestant denominations in the Advent Movement of 1840 stopped believing the 2300-day prophecy fulfillment by 1843--- the so-called "first disappointment," when they should have continued on to discover its correct and "unimpeachable" application in October 22, 1844

(2) Its incisive discourse on the relation of prophecy to Providence, and vice versa, is vital to understanding our position today and realizing where we individually stand before God in this closing work of atonement in the Investigative Judgment. Unless otherwise indicated, all emphases supplied.

"The Blessed Redeemer informs us, in this connection, what His servants may expect from this world. "Ye shall be hated of all men for My sake." "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more, them of His household." "Fear them not, however, for their agency is limited to this world---to the body. Nothing that befalls you is beneath My notice,---nothing that you suffer is overlooked. No sacrifice will be unrewarded. A prophet's and a righteous man's reward may be yours; because those who receive them as such, obtain their reward, and "whosoever shall give, to drink, unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say to you, *he shall in no wise* lose his reward." Verses, 41. 42.

"Everything as important as your murder, or as minute as the falling of a sparrow, or the pulling of a hair from your head, by the wicked, occurs by the direction, or permission of Providence. Nothing that befalls you shall occur "without your Father." Whosoever, therefore, believes in this, and will lose His life for My sake, shall find it." Whosoever, in view of opposition or reproach, will fearlessly "confess Me before men," I will own and honor, "before My Father, in heaven."

We have here, a most impressive statement of the Doctrine of Divine Providence, and Divine guidance; for nothing less important than the numbering of the hairs of their heads, can well be conceived. The assurance is adapted to encourage faith, and dissipate all fear of erring man.

“This doctrine of Providence seems to be comprehended but by a few. I do not say that few comprehend the stupendous scheme and scope of Providence. This is clear; for finite cannot comprehend the infinite. The creature cannot attain the lofty reach of the Creator’s purpose, but I mean to say that few understand, by faith, the scriptural doctrine of providence. It is no more necessary for us to grasp the boundless plan of Providence, in order to believe, than it is to comprehend the infinite God in order to believe in God. “It is high as heaven, what can we know, deeper than hell, what can we do, the measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea.” We may, however, believe in God, of the ways of God which belongs to our time, and concerns our duty and destiny. It is ruinous, not thus to believe.

“There are fewer still that have any just appreciation of the revealed object of God’s Providence. It is, in its loftiest range and minutest supervision, to carry forward and carry out the purpose of Jehovah. Eph. 1: 9, 10. Having made known unto us the mystery of His will---that in the dispensation of the fullness of times, He might gather together in one, all things in Christ.

“Divine Providence is Divine oversight---Divine care, or administration over this and other worlds---angels, men, and devils. Its object is to lay every creature and every agency under contribution to His all comprehending purpose. Like a mighty flood (in one point) it comprehends all, unites the past with the present, and the present with the future; and bears all forward toward the consummation---making each and every event “work together for good to them that love God.” _____. The channel in which this mighty, every-heaving tide of cause and effect, purpose and accomplishment flows, is “the sure word of prophecy.” _____.

“Prophetic truth is the track on which Jehovah’s providential chariot has ever rolled. On this track it will roll, till it reaches the grand depot. By taking heed to “the sure word of prophecy,” we may see in what direction God is driving His (to most men) dreadful agencies; and toward what grand consummation, His plan of Providence is tending. By watching, in the light of revealed truth, for the intermediate objects on the way to the consummation, we may know how many we have yet to pass, and how few we have yet to pass. If we had not passed all the great kingdoms, save the closing scene of the last, ---the first Advent,---the apostasy, --- the “rush to and fro” with the “increase of knowledge” which was to characterize “the time of the end” [since 1798],---the series of “signs” by which we may “know” our Lord is near,---the preaching of the faithful and unfaithful servant,---the going forth, the tarrying, and the subsequent midnight cry [of the parable of the 10 virgins in the summer of 1844], then they are yet to come; but if these events are matters of historic record, then we cannot, in the light of reason and revelation, look for them amid the development of future prophetic fulfillment.

“Prophecy is history in advance. History is the record of prophecy fulfilled. All the great kingdoms of the earth, with their greatest changes,---the first Advent and the vicissitudes of the [Christian] church, were sketched out by the pencil of prophecy, about twenty hundred years ago, but now, all authentic history testifies to the fact that we have in the progress of Providence, passed Babylon [Medo]-Persia, Greece, and Rome,---the

first Advent and the predicted revolutions of the fourth empire, save one, which terminates its dreadful career.

“Thus all history, as well as scripture, proves the declaration of the prophet of God. *“Surely the Lord will do nothing, but He revealeth His secrets to His servants, the prophets.”* Amos 3: 7. He unscales [removes the scales from] the prophet’s eye, and opens to his view coming events. The historian sits to record them as they occur. Providence never mistakes, nor wheels round, to roll by the predicted events the second time. No, when the event has been recorded, it is, like the Deluge [Noah’s Flood], in the past. There is no second series of the four great empires,---no second First Advent, nor time of the end, nor midnight cry. “As for God His ways are perfect,” therefore He never mends His ways. He fulfills His word at once, and it is done forever. The prophetic sketch is sketched correctly. All the events of history harmonize with it. In the order of sequence, in time and manner, they all transpire as penciled by prophecy. The history of those nations [and empires] which come within the range of prophetic vision, attests the truth of the scriptural doctrine of Providence. The heathen, and our entire race are comprehended within the range of those prophecies that relate to the consummation, but up to that period, prophecy, more immediately, if not entirely, relates to those nations whose history is connected with God’s people.

I. We will take a brief survey of the field and scope of Prophecy. This is the theater of Providence and the theme of history. The grand, the parent prophecy, the germ of Jehovah’s revealed purpose, the mother text is Genesis 3: 15. The Seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent---crush the power. In the more full expression of this prophetic truth, it is affirmed that: “for this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” Redeem this world from sin and the curse, and fill it with the glory of God. When “death and him that has the power of death” will have been destroyed, not a scrap [is] left. When all corruption shall have fled into hell to be forgotten, and every creature in earth and heaven, and under the earth shall join in the song of salvation, then all will be “very good,” as God made it [in the beginning], God will again dwell with men, and they will be immortal.

“Though God have His fallen creature man, this assurance of triumph over the tempter, and a typical service called sacrifice, to embody the great truth in their worship, so that none could worship but by calling the promised Deliverer to mind; yet, in process of time, all had corrupted their way, save one man. The Deluge then, became a means essential to the attainment of the end, which God had revealed. To prevent the universal putrefaction and perdition of the race---to counteract the tempter and prevent his triumph, Jehovah poured a Flood around the world to wash it of its pollution.

“Then again, after the flood, when mankind forgot alike God’s judgments and promises and claims; and under the guidance of Satan were tending to the same state with that of the inhabitants of the Old World, it became necessary for God to interpose. Having pledged Himself not to allow another deluge, He gave up most of the world to their chosen way,---to fear and serve the Devil, their chosen god; hence they do not come within the range of prophecy, except for destruction. God Almighty chose Abraham his friend and servant. He separated him from the mass of mankind, to be the head of His household,--the household of faith. The ordinance of circumcision was the token, and the memorial of their separation to be God’s peculiar people.

“The sojourn in, and deliverance from Egypt---their miraculous preservation in the wilderness [for forty years]---their wonderful history in Canaan, in which God seems

ever to have His eye on His promise and pledge to Abraham,---their dispersion and otherwise unaccountable preservation to this day, according to prophecy, proves, that there is a Providence. A special, as well as a general supervision which God extends over the affairs of men. The divine plan, as sketched out in prophecy, touching the first Advent, the revolutions in the Roman Empire, the apostasy, the changes [7 stages] in the Christian church, is fully sustained by the record of Providence. The field of prophecy has been the theater of Providence.

“The prophecy may be regarded as a *conception* of the specified event. Then the watchful eye of God is ever extended over it, His fostering hand cherishes the embryo till “the set time,” then every event, as minute as the falling sparrow, and everything as vast as the dissolution of an empire, or the destruction of the world, will, by the direction of Providence, concur to give it *birth*. To such events there are no abortions. No counterfeit fulfillments [though Satan is ever attempting to]. They are absolutely unique in their character. Each predicted event down the entire track of Providence, is as peculiar and as distinct from every other, as are the four great empires---as the First Advent from the Second. We can no more *confound* them, (though we may be ourselves confused [and deceived by Satan]) than we can confound the earth with *its* central Sun---or the Deluge with the final conflagration [the final purification of the earth by the fires of the last days].

“Such is the astonishing precision of the prophetic chart. Such [is] the wonderful accuracy with which Providence fulfills the minutest touch of the prophetic pencil. “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? Yet not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father.” “Fear not, therefore,” ye willing servants of the Most High. God’s plan does not contemplate the giving of you up to the delusion of the devil. ‘Ye are of more value than many sparrows.’ “But thou Israel, art My servant. Jacob whom I have chosen.” The seed of Abraham, my friend, I have chosen thee, and shall not cast thee away. Fear thou not, for I am with thee.” Isa. xli: 8. Who as I, shall call, and declare it, and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people? The things that are coming, and shall come, let the shew unto them. Fear ye not, neither be afraid; have I not told thee from that time, and declared it?---Ye are *even My witnesses*. Is there a God beside Me ? No, for even Jehovah himself says that He does not know of any.

“The prophet, in harmony with the great Teacher, Messiah, teaches us not to fear earth or hell [death and the grave]; but to fear Him who “hath set in order,” and told what is coming and shall come. *Those who declare the truth of prophecy and show its harmony with history and passing events are God’s “witnesses.”* We testify [to] His existence and point to the evidence of His ever present Providence, in “what is coming and what shall come.” We delight to recognize His all-comprehending agency. We “leap with joy,” when, with this evidence that we are His witnesses, we hear Him saying, ‘Fear not.’ --“The very hairs of your head are all numbered.” Such are brethren to Paul “not in darkness.” They having got [obtained], can give “meat in due season.” Having Christ, they can confess Him “before men.”

“Those who know not God, either in His prophecy of Providence, are not His “witnesses.” They cannot be the “Israel” whom Jehovah cheers on to achieve the victories of faith. Such may tremble for their reputation, vie with Jesuits in their energy and policy to get the “honor that cometh from men;” but he “who is not with Me is against Me,”

saith Jesus. The Jews 1,800 years since could not deny the facts occurring around them, nor dared they deny the prophecies; but they denied that the facts in the life of Jesus fulfilled prophecy. Thus they were not God's "witnesses." The few despised disciples who saw the hand of Providence fulfilling prophecy, were God's *witnesses*. The Messiah assured *them* that they had nothing to fear from death or devils." John 10: 28.

"That people who would not believe both prophecy and Providence, had rejected all the light God gives to sustain faith. Then they were in His way, and the wheels of Providence must either stop, or they be crushed by its onward revolutions. Just so now. The professing churches having taken their stand, denying that Providence is fulfilling prophecy, connected with the second Advent, (though they can neither deny the prophecies of such events, nor the facts of their occurrence) must and will perish, as did the Jewish nation. All the evidence which God grants is given, when history testifies the truth of prophecy; consequently, if that be denied, Christ is denied, and "wrath to the utmost" will come on those who had till then, been His acknowledged people. By how much the Christian church has had greater light than the Jewish, by so much is their guilt greater, and their revealed damnation more dreadful. Matt. 24: 51; 1 Thes. 5: 3; 2 Thess. 2: 10-12.

"Professing Adventists have no dispensation in their favor, but must see their flagrant folly, if they recognize prophetic fulfillment up to a certain point in our history, and then deny in those events which are most manifestly, in time, order of sequence, and manner of occurrence, just what Jesus predicted. This was the sin of the Jews in the first Advent. They saw and confessed both prophecy and Providence, up to their own age, and history. This, the folly of the Protestant church, they recognize both down to this generation; but from that point they seem blind as bats in the daytime. **Now shall Adventists come on, be witnesses for God, and "confess" Christ only up to 1843?** Did either prophecy or Providence stop there? Or has Satan steered the ship over the shoals, at the tarrying,--- up the falls of the seventh month, giving out the false midnight cry, and a mistaken clamor as he shoved through the '*shut door*,' and got the whole of his crew where they cannot hear, or much regard, the evidence of opening Judgment! It may be very convenient to say that Satan has the helm; but that, damned the Pharisees. It has left the churches, like the mountains of Gilboa, on which there was neither rain nor dew. It must be ruin to every such soul; for 'whoever denies Me before men,' says Christ, 'I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.' O Lord we will 'confess' Thee in Thy Providence, and when predicted events occur, we will, by Thy grace, *witness* for Thee. Amen!

II. The doctrine as we find it in the scriptures should be distinctly stated in order to be correctly conceived. The doctrine is that THERE ARE NO AGENCIES ADEQUATE TO GIVE BIRTH TO PREDICTED EVENTS, SAVE AS GOD EMPLOYS; *consequently when they occur, we may know without a doubt, not only that they are a fulfillment, but also that God has done it.* [all emphasis in the original].

"The Jews said that the wonders they saw [that Jesus performed] were wrought by Beelzebub [the prince of devils, Satan]. The church affirms that the advent movement 'is of the devil.' Some 'adventists' who would not venture to say that Satan guided those who preached the hour of judgment in 1843, and the midnight cry in the autumn of 1844; yet they do not confess Christ—His word or Providence in it. Now we may as well be candid; acknowledge the Providence of God in it, or deny it. If the Arch Apostate be allowed, at the predicted time, and in the recorded connection of events, to get up a counterfeit

fulfillment, then what ground is left for faith? We may never be confident that the word of God is being, or has been fulfilled: consequently, unbelief may not be sinful. Nay, why would it not be praiseworthy? It is both rational and *right* [emphasis in the original], to doubt, where there is good reason for doubting, as where there is good reason for doubting, as rational and right as to believe where there is reason, to believe.

“But we maintain, with all our might and mind, that there is not in the scriptural doctrine of Providence any ground at all, for doubt. When the most unimportant events transpired in the life of Jesus, according to prophecy, they were recognized as *the fulfillment*. Taken together, they were regarded as proof positive, that Providence had put its broad seal on His Messiahship.—The time and circumstances were not, however, more correctly sketched than is the time of the second Advent, or the events which immediately precede and introduce it.

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“If the events referred to have been witnessed, even though they be as unimportant in human esteem as the parting of our Savior’s raiment, or His burial in a rich man’s tomb, it is the fulfillment of the prophecy. God in His providence has done it. We have got beyond those way marks on the prophetic track. They can never be witnessed again; God’s word is the truth---the truth is the agreement between His word and the event, as brought out in Providence. If the word names it but once, and Providence produces it, or allows it, twice; then there is not an agreement. Should Providence grow ‘slack as some count slackness,’ let Satan get the start and counterfeit the event, agreement would not exist; because the prophetic word notices *no counterfeit*, with the genuine event. But we affirm in the highest and best authority, God’s ‘*word* is TRUTH.’ The events of Providence must agree. There will be no repetitions, or false fulfillments, where none are specified. We are bound to believe ‘without doubt or wavering.’ There is an ease, a naturalness, a Divinity about them, which walls off all cause of doubt. It is true doubts arise, but they spring forth from a source entirely disconnected from the prophetic fulfillment,---from the heart.

“Let us therefore illustrate by several recorded events, in which the principle, or doctrine, as stated, must be acknowledged, just as far as the Bible is allowed to be true.

1. We notice the creatures, ‘of every kind,’ which went into the ark with Noah. The Patriarch was told, yet seven days I will cause it to rain on the earth. ‘Come thou and all thy house into the Ark. Of every clean beast *thou shalt take* to thee by sevens. Of fowls also, of the air, by sevens, the male and his female, to keep seed alive upon the earth.’ This was the plan revealed 120 years before; but did Noah set traps to catch the birds? Did he make yokes, and harness, for the mighty lion and his mate, and other creatures of less strength, but greater fierceness and rapacity? No, no, that would have been a greater labor than to have erected the Ark! THEY CAME, and ‘went in two by two unto Noah, into the ark, the male and his female, as God commanded Noah.’ They seemed to have come in one day; because ‘the waters of the flood were upon the earth,’ after seven days. Their entrance was *as natural as that of Noah himself*. They came spontaneously like the subsequent descending flood. This event was as great a miracle as the Deluge, and was adapted to sustain and settle the faith of Noah’s family. They had no fears that the old ship would founder, or spring a leak after that. There was Jehovah’s hand. The event occurred at the *right time*. God’s Providence concurred with Noah to fulfill His word. That cannot be counterfeited.

2. Joseph was informed by God that his brethren who hated him should do him reverence. Gen. 37:1-9. As they were, in vision, binding sheaves in the field, his sheaf

stood up, and their stood around doing obeisance to it. Now this, and another dream, were accomplished in a way that no mortal could have imagined. The Devil did not dream how it could be done---muchless counterfeit it. The brethren must find the pasture short, as far as Dothan, where the Ishmaelitish caravan was to pass on their way on to Egypt. Joseph must, in order to obey his father, go to Dothan; and the caravan come, *just in time* to take him from the murderous hands of his brethren. Then all the events clear down to the seven years of plenty, and the seven years of famine, which reached to Canaan and compelled the sons of Jacob to go down into Egypt and bow 'to the lord of the land,' occurred in Providence, as if they were so many means to accomplish the end,---fill out the prophetic sketch. The date, name and circumstances, guard this event, and defy all attempts to counterfeit it. Like most events of prophecy, this is the fulfillment, complicated and apparently counter, as were many of its parts, does not stand isolated. Its admirable parts are themselves part of God's great plan of Providence---a few links in the golden chain which then connected the past with the present, and stretched on in its influence, into the future. It was all comprehended in the prophecy made to Abraham, concerning his prosperity. Joseph's history was to previous prophecy, as the woof to the warp.

3. The deliverance of Israel from Egypt furnishes a striking illustration of the doctrine of a special Providence. Moses was not murdered according to Pharaoh's decree; but nourished by his own mother. Nay, the author of the decree of his daughter, *paid her wages for her maternal caresses*.

The elevation of David to the throne of Israel, and the entire history of that nation, proves clearly the doctrine stated, that there are no agencies adequate to fulfill prophecy, saves such as God employs. When a predicted event does occur, we may know that it is a fulfillment of the prediction, and that God's Providence has interposed for its fulfillment. To such events there are no seconds, any more than a second birth, or baptism, or burial of Messiah. The chariot of Providence rolls by. The event looms up with God's seal impressed on it. It never recurs.

An apparent exception may be suggested, from the false christs, that have appeared; but on reflection it must be seen, that they are themselves a verification of the doctrine, because they come within the range of prophecy. Their appearance must be found in history. Their appearance must be found in history, their record of Providence.

III. Let us notice the more important reflections suggested by this subject.

1. God has magnified *His word above all name*; therefore all the leading events recorded in the history of the world, have occurred as to time, circumstance and connection with the past and the future, according to God's word. Nothing which comes in competition with that word can stand before it. No, not even though it bear God's name. Jerusalem, the Temple and the chosen seed, must *perish*, sooner than 'a jot or tittle' of the word should fail. Those attributes of wisdom and goodness and justice and mercy and power which have secured a fulfillment of the 'sure word' thus far, are all pledged to accomplish every minute, every grand prophecy relating to the consummation. *God in His word specifies each event. His people drink in the Spirit by believing the word---they yield themselves up to His guidance, and the Providence of God concurs, then the even transpires*. There will be nothing in all time [exactly] like it. Should any combination of agencies attempt a fulfillment, it would be, lie false christs, out of the predicted time, and out against all arrangements of Providence; hence, the could not succeed.

The prophecy relating to the Turks is an instance [the Ottoman Empire collapsed in 1840, as prophesied] of the steady purpose of Providence, to allow no agencies to impede

His purpose. In their rise they prevailed in spite of all crusaders and all Christendom. Then at the expiration of their appointed time, they declined, though all the great Christian powers [Europe] are in holy league to sustain them [at that time]. It is then, clear as scripture fulfilled can make it, that there are no agencies [of Satan or man] which can counterfeit or derange the progressive fulfillment of the prophetic word. When the time arrives, each predicted event appears; and God's Providence *must be recognized in it*, or we be convicted as, so far, infidels.

2. Many confess' the Divine hand in the scores of prophecies, fulfilled at the First Advent of Jesus; but they imagine that He will not be very exact in honoring the predictions, or teachings of His Son relative to the second [advent]. They forget that God's Word is but the second edition of Himself, ---identified with Himself, ---the transcript of His own mind. He must, to 'honor His word above all His name,' maintain it, though it requires the ruin of the professing church, or the dissolution of the world. We may begin a series commencing two thousand four hundred years ago,---and come down the track of prophecy. We find the four kingdoms [of Daniel 2], the First Advent, The Apostasy [the great falling away of the Christian church to become the papal church], the taking away of the dominion [from the Jewish nation]. The progress of 'knowledge,' in the 'time of the end' [since 1798], the signs in this generation, which 'shall not pass till all be fulfilled,' the preaching of the faithful and unfaithful servants. The going forth to meet the Lord, in the light of the prophetic periods, and the fulfilled signs of His coming,---the subsequent tarrying, the midnight cry, and the clamor about the 'door,' and the 'going without the camp bearing His reproach,' have transpired in the time, order, and manner in which they are noted in the prophetic page.

Let us mark the series in the parable, Matt. 25: 1-10. The preaching of the time, and the signs was sustained by most marked interpositions of Providence. The [Lisbon] earthquake which rocked half the earth. The comet's trail extending half across the heavens. --"The fearful sights and great signs from the heaven." "Signs in the Sun, and in the moon and in the stars." 'Men's hearts failing them for fear, and looking after those things which are coming on the earth.' This was the class of predicted events, which filled the press, arrested the public mind and forced the conviction on multitudes, that something dreadful was at hand. This class of events greatly confirmed believers in their *going forth* 'to meet the Bridegroom.' Learned ministers and learned unbelievers confessed the plausibility of our scriptural argument. The unlearned and the unreflecting could see the natural signs, and feel the beating of the public pulse. Thousands and tens of thousands trembled, though unconverted still. The mass of mind was, to say the least, as much affected, as 1800 years since, by the interposition of Providence to bring out the day of Pentecost, 'according to the scriptures.' Now Mark! *Some body or some thing, did these things, at the time specified 'in the vision' written on tables.* It was a freak of nature, --chance 'mesmerism, human influence,' the Devil or else in accordance with predictions of Jesus. If then last, then we had the right time. God put His broad seal on it. We did 'understand' the periods. The 'vision did speak and did not lie.' Amen! This providential interposition did not take place in 1842 not in 1844; but in that every year to which the prophetic times pointed, in the year when the virgins took their lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom.' It was 1843. Amen." -- pp. 7-12

(To be continued on next month's study).

