**Miracles, Prayer, and Predestination**

**Miracles**

A miracle is an event that cannot be described by any natural law. Such an event is said to be supernatural. A distinction must be made between a miracle and God’s providence. In a miracle God sets aside natural law. In providence God utilizes his natural laws to accomplish his will. For example, we are told to pray for our daily bread (Matt. 6:11). We do not expect bread to appear miraculously on our table. Rather, we rely on God to give us employment to earn our daily bread. The aged and handicapped person relies on family or benevolent people to provide the bread. Let us notice some other examples.

Miracle

Mary, a virgin (Isaiah 7:14), gave birth to Jesus; this was caused by means of miraculous power (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:30-37).

Providence

Hannah of Old Testament fame prayed for a son; the Lord heard her prayer and answered it. He did so providentially; she conceived only after her husband “knew her.” Ultimately Samuel was born (1 Samuel 1:19,20).

Miracle

When the Assyrian army threatened the city of Jerusalem, God supernaturally destroyed 185,000 enemy soldiers in a single night (Isaiah 37:36).

Providence

Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, was dealt with in a different fashion. Jehovah caused him to “hear tidings” that prompted his return to Assyria (Isaiah 37:7).

To qualify as a miracle, an event must 1) involve God’s intervention; 2) be observable (by one or more of the five senses); 3) involve a suspension of natural process; 4) involve no autosuggestion or

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**Providence and the Eternal Purpose of God**

**Introduction**

The providence of God cannot be separated from His eternal purpose to create, sustain, and redeem mankind. It was God’s eternal purpose to: 1) create a universe in which to demonstrate His power and glory (Psalm 19:1); 2) make a place for the habitation of mankind (Genesis 1: 1-31); 3) create a holy people to glorify Him (Ephesians 1:4-6); 4) sustain, bless, and redeem His children (Ephesians 1:15-20; 5) provide an institution for fellowship (Ephesians 3:10-11); 6) prepare an eternal home for the redeemed (John 14: 1-4); and 7) separate His children permanently from the influence of sin (Revelation 21:4; Revelation 20:10). The Bible assures us that Satan, the source of sin, will ultimately be destroyed (Rev. 20:10). In the meantime, God’s children must live in a sinful world and contend with the choices made possible by free will.

Free will allows us to make either good or bad choices (Joshua 24:15; Matthew 6:24). The very first humans chose disobedience. They heard, believed, and obeyed a lie. God’s eternal purpose includes the possibility of redemption from sin if His children hear, believe, and obey the truth (John 1:12).

In the Bible, God is called by many names that indicate His ability to provide for His people and redeem them. Some of these titles identify Him with the needs of man: 1) Father (Luke 15); 2) Shepherd (Psalm 23); and 3) Love (1 John 4:1). He is also described by titles which show His power to provide: 1) God =Elohim—Trinity (Genesis 1); 2) Creator (Genesis 1:1); 3) Sustainer (Acts 17:28); 4) King (Ps. 10:16); 5) Lawgiver (Exodus 20); 6) Judge (Ps. 58:11).

**Panorama of God’s Eternal Purpose**

**The three Bible Dispensations**

God’s plan for the preservation and redemption of His children is the

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