**PROVIDENCE (#5)**

***God Rules In The Kingdoms Of Men***

It was a very hot day in the summer of 1787. The Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia’s Pennsylvania State House (later named Independence Hall) was at a boiling point regarding writing a new constitution for America. Controversy between the northern and southern states was a major fight, as was the arguments over representation between the larger populated states and the smaller ones. It seemed this was all going to end very badly. The new country, having just gained its independence from England, would dissolve into 13 separate colonies with no unifying law to guide them. Tempers flared and division grew wider.

Up stepped wise old Benjamin Franklin to address George Washington, who presided over the convention. He said these brilliant words that saved the day, and the nation.

“Mr. President…groping as it were in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of lights to illuminate our understandings?… I have lived, Sir, a long time and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth — that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings that “except the Lord build, they labor in vain that build it.”

Mr. Franklin, often called a deist by historians, sure had a peculiar way of denying that charge when he claimed “that God governs in the affairs of men” – and, “except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” I cannot think of a better way to express the providence of God then that famous quote by old Ben. Providence, in its most basic form, is God watching over His creation with wisdom and care. “*God so loved the world that He gave*…” is a perfect description of providence.

Ben Franklin was all but quoting Daniel 2:20-21 when he said “that God governs in the affairs of men.” Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed something wild and crazy but had forgotten the details. He was troubled mightily to remember it and know what it meant. The wise men and astrologers confessed ignorance to reveal it, but Daniel asked for time to seek God’s revelation. It was granted. He thanked God for revealing the dream with these words: *“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, For wisdom and might are His.
And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings”*

God changes the times and seasons. He enthrones and dethrones kings as He pleases. The *New Living Translation* says it this way, “*He controls the course of world events*.” That’s a good way to see that in this season of political elections amidst national chaos. Abraham reminds us, “*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right*?” (Gen. 18:25). God’s people cry out the answer in unison: “Yes! He shall!” We shout that reply in confidence, for we have seen it throughout Biblical history, and all human history. We remember king Hezekiah, surrounded by the Assyrian army, threatening to annihilate Judah, going into the temple and praying to God to save them. He said these immortal words which God heard and responded to with a spectacular deliverance:

“O LORD God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, **You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth**. You have made heaven and earth. Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib… Now therefore, O LORD our God, I pray, **save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the LORD God, You alone**.”

But it’s Daniel’s reply to Nebuchadnezzar that stands out that settles the issue of God’s providence. After he told the king his dream that God raises up kings and kingdoms (i.e. Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome) we hear this amazing response by the king: *“Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret”* (Dan. 2:47). Later, in another dream, followed by Daniel once more interpreting it for the king, we hear these words from Daniel, then Nebuchadnezzar:

Daniel*: “They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.”*

Nebuchadnezzar: *“For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, “What have You done?”*

What this Babylonian king learned the hard way (he was dethroned and seemingly went mad, living like an ox in the field) we all should learn the easy way (just believe the Bible). God is ruling and reigning from heaven! Do I really (I mean, ***really***) believe that? Does Christ really have “*all authority in heaven and on earth*” (Matt. 28:18)? Is it true what Peter said that Christ *“has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him”* (I Pet. 3:22)? Did Daniel’s interpretation really happen that *“in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever”* (Dan. 2:44)?

My point. God, through Christ, is enthroned in heaven. He has orchestrated kingdoms to rise and fall at His command. He has history under control. That history is all leading to a grand climax when, as Henry Trickett’s hymn in 1887 reminds us: “*The kingdoms of the earth pass away one by one, but the kingdom of heaven remains*.” God rules in the kingdoms of men, therefore what happens in elections, or in my life, is whittled down to but one thing: “*Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness*?” (2 Pet. 3:11). That’s all you have to know, and answer. God’s hand is on the wheel. Rest in peace.

I love you. - Rick