

Second New Testament Summary on Providence in the New Testament

"Providence" is sometimes used as a force in and of itself (something along the lines of "fate," or "destiny," etc.). Such an understanding misses the Christian meaning of the word. From the perspective of the New Testament, it ("providence") describes God guiding and directing all things. Acts 17:26 says, "From one man [God] made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live." Verse 28a says, "For in him we live and move and have our being." Such descriptions also touch on the idea of "sovereignty" that conveys God's gracious rule over all things, working out all things according to His good purpose. The details of human history are not random, but purposeful. Romans 8:28 says, "For all things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose." If these concepts ever applied to anything, they apply to the time of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. St. Paul says in Galatians 4:4: "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son...". This is a remarkable statement. It means among other things that Christ came at the perfect time. It was not a random time and place in history. Professor Schuler discusses "The World of the New Testament" in our textbook (chapter 2). God's perfect timing and perfect placing is seen for example in the geography Schuler discusses. The land of Jesus (Palestine) was THE land-bridge for the rest of the world. When the disciples went forth, the book of Acts describes in many places, "and the Word of the Lord grew." They had a perfect launching pad for going East and West, North and South. The Great Commission (Christ's command to His apostles to make disciples ["learners"/"followers"] of Jesus Christ through baptism and teaching) was facilitated geographically. Jesus also came during the glory of the Roman Empire. The Pax Romana prevailed. The peace in the empire facilitated effective travel throughout the land. Hellenism established a shared culture and as a result, a shared language. Judaism was very well established, so that synagogues were available for explaining the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures. All of these things aligned...the convergence of a perfect set of circumstances for the Gospel of Jesus Christ to spread. I look forward to your thoughts especially in respect to the four areas which converged which led to the spreading of the Gospel ("Gospel" = the Good News message that Jesus Christ through His life, death, and resurrection has saved us from sin, death, and the power of the evil one). Thanks! Dr. Espinosa