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## THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW (CONT'D)

**Providence & Miracles** – Mentioned earlier, let's view it from another angle. We don't hear the term "providence" very often these days, but we hear the word "miracle" too often. In a general sense, "providence" refers to God's continuing work in history, specifically, causing "possible" things to happen in a manner that fits with His purposes - influencing the "timing" of events and/or the speed at which naturally possible processes occur. On the other hand, "miracles" are Divine interventions into the natural order, causing things to happen that were not "possible" by the processes of the "natural" system. The development and birth of a baby is not a "miracle" – it is a marvelous process that God designed into the "natural" biological system and by this system God "knits us together in the womb," but it is not Divine intervention that causes something "unnatural" to occur. The "childbirth is a miracle" folks would have trouble selling their view to many parents of children born with serious birth defects ("what happened to our miracle?") – in reality, "birth defects" are a matter of type/degree, for none of us were born physically "perfect."

How do we interpret God's providential working? Very carefully! Our main problem is that we cannot infallibly distinguish what God does/intends versus what He allows without special revelation. Hence, it is easy to misinterpret events, as some of Jesus' listeners had done (Luke 13:1-5; John 9:1-3). While admirable for cautioning hasty action against the church, Gamaliel committed a logical fallacy when he assumed that God would not let error/heresy spread, continue, or succeed (Acts 5:38,39) - many false religions have arisen and flourished for centuries! It may be appropriate to piously speculate on what God may/may not be doing in any situation, but we must be careful about teaching our opinions as doctrine!

**Other supernatural entities** - The supernatural realm is not just inhabited by God, but the Bible tells us that angels, demons, and our Adversary (the Serpent, dragon, devil, Satan) also really exist. I must confess that I have never, knowingly seen an angel, demon, or Satan, but I have had two encounters in which I sensed that I was in the presence of people strongly influenced by evil beings. On the other hand, Hebrews 1:14 suggests that we do not need to "recognize" when angelic help is being rendered (the real thing can be "unrecognized" – Hebrews 13:2). Rather than a perpetual "angel hunt," just trust that God can and does help us when it is really needed (as in Acts 12:7ff) and get on with your assigned duties. Similarly, I don't look for the Devil or demons under the bed or in every closet, because I trust that the Holy Spirit within is greater than the adversary outside (1John 4:4).

**Prayer and My Life** - The Bible indicates that God hears and answers prayers, but He certainly does not always answer them when and how we would like them answered. Prayers, apparently unanswered, may make us wonder if the "answered ones" were just coincidences, but

prayer is not how we “manipulate a divine gum-ball machine” (work the machinery right and you get the prize every time). Rather, we are laying our concerns upon God and asking Him to “sort them out” and do what is best. In all of this, we need to humbly remember that this is God’s universe and He is working out much bigger plans than we can even fathom. As an adult, I have learned the sobering truth that most of what is going on does NOT revolve around me – God cares about me and will provide good for me ultimately (Romans 8:28), but this universe was not created just for me.

### ***Human sin, the Curse, and the Promise***

“**Sin**” – the idea of missing a target or falling short of a Divine standard - is not a very popular concept right now in Western Society. With God and moral absolutes “out the window,” we are trying to convince ourselves that “what is” is “what should be” – but I don’t think many really buy that notion. After the 1960’s “Sexual revolution” and the unveiling of the “New Morality” (which looked exactly like the “old immorality”), you would think that everybody’s personal preferences would be sacred forty years later. Yet despite the eviction of God and His Word from public discussions, such things as abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, sexual abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, political corruption, etc. have not really become “normal” – they are still seen as “problems” by a large number of people. Why? Maybe because something within us just can’t accept such things as “normal” and “good” – they aren’t and ceasing to call such things “sin” does not change the nature of the actions or their results! Read through Genesis and the Mosaic Law code – there is something remarkably similar about that “old stuff,” what we are like, and what we see going on around us every day. “Sin” is still a pretty good term for it – humans ignoring God’s limits and making our own decisions (based on our urges, appetites, emotions, and ignorance) about what is “good and evil.”

The “**Curse**” - While “original sin” theology fails to note that God specifically “cursed” the Serpent (Genesis 3:14) and the ground (Genesis 3:17,18), rather than human nature, Paul later said that the “Creation” was subjected to a “futility/corruption” (Genesis 3:14-19; Romans 8:20,21). This is still a good description of what we face – things wear out, grow old, disintegrate, rust, become choked with weeds/thorns, and our best plans and projects yield breakdowns and require constant maintenance. Physicists call it the 2<sup>nd</sup> principle of Thermodynamics – a tendency towards disorder. So, we medicate, lubricate, paint, and repair everything from our bodies to the satellites we put into orbit, because there is a curse of futility and corruption at work in the universe. The Bible seems to be telling it like it is.

Next – the Main Event.