

Matthew 2:13-15 When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” ¹⁴ So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, ¹⁵ where he stayed until the death of Herod.

1 Peter 1:5-7 [You] who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Genesis 50:20 [Then Joseph said to his brothers,] “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”

“We stand under the unfathomable, sovereign will of God. One man has this particular trouble, another man has that; the one suffers today, the other tomorrow; the one suffers much, the other little; the one suffers natural, usual evils, the other suffers for the name of Christ. Hidden from our eyes is the reason why God imposes such suffering at all, why he dispenses them so differently. This alone is sure, that all things must work together for good, i.e., for sanctification and salvation, to those who love God.” (Prof. A. Pieper, Our Great Heritage, Vol II, p. 162)

Providential Points

1. Share one or two passages or truths from the Bible that demonstrate how God is interested with what happens in the world.
2. The fact that God actively cares for his creation is called his providence. There are three facets of God’s providence.

Psalms 145:15 “The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time.”

- Preservation:

Acts 17:28 “For in him we live and move and have our being.”

Colossians 1:17 “In [Jesus] all things hold together.”

- Concurrence/Cooperation:

Jeremiah 10:23 “LORD, I know that people’s lives are not their own; it is not for them to direct their steps.”

- Governance:

Think about it! What are the implications of this final passage for the plans you make for your life?

3. As you read the following passages, identify why it may *seem to some* that Jesus is not interested in the world.

Romans 8:19-25 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

Matthew 24:3-14 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” ⁴ Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. ⁶ You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of birth pains. ⁹ Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ¹⁰ At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹² Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³ but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

4. In what ways do these passages demonstrate that Jesus is interested in what happens in the world?
5. What is the greatest evidence that God is not distant nor disinterested?

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son.”

Isaiah 53:5-6,10 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. . . . Yet it was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

Ephesians 1:22 God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.

6. How do these truths impact how you view the world?

Group Discussion

1. How might a skeptic respond to the following arguments that God cares for the world?
 - “God sends rain and gives sunlight and makes crops grow so we can eat.”
 - “People care about each other and reflect God’s love.”
 - “God gives life to everything—childbirth and in nature.”
2. Some say, “If only God would appear and show us that he is in control, then we’d recognize that he cares!” Remember, he did that in Jesus and most people rejected him. As we have seen, God does care about what happens in the world, but he does wear *masks*. He often works through the people or institutions he places in our lives. List some of them. How are these agents of his care and blessing?
3. Based on the truths we’ve learned today how would you respond to a coworker who says, “God seems like he’s a million miles away right now—he doesn’t care about what I’m going through!”