



GOD'S VISION FOR YOUR PROVISION

**UNDERSTANDING GOD'S
ECONOMIC SYSTEM**

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Understanding God's Economic System

Provision and Worship in a Babylonian Environment

By Isaiah-Phillips Akintola /PortalsGate Publications

Defining Provision

The word provision describes a resource already supplied and made available for the fulfillment of a vision. Its roots carry the idea of seeing ahead, since to provide means to see beforehand and prepare for what that sight reveals. Provision therefore begins with God's sight of our lives long before it reaches our hands, which is why we must carry a clear understanding of His intention for us. Life must be lived from a position of vision, because provision is attached to vision and follows it.

When we hear the word vision, we often think of the complex and massive things we believe God wants us to accomplish. Those things matter, yet vision at its most basic is an understanding of God's intentions for our lives as we move toward the fulfillment of our assignment. Vision is the overall reality of God's plan for us. It always speaks to destiny, while it also brings us back to the starting point, where we begin to move in the direction of God's counsel: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jeremiah 29:11).

Vision is progressive. It has a birth, a stage of growth, and an advanced stage, and God attaches provision to every one of them. We see this in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. At His birth, wise men came from the east and "presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh" (Matthew 2:11). Scripture does not tell us how long those gifts lasted, though they arrived before the angel instructed Joseph to take the child and His mother into Egypt (Matthew 2:13-14).

As Jesus grew and stepped into ministry, His provision took a different form. It no longer came from travellers out of the east; it came through the people God placed around Him. Luke records that certain women, among them Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna, "ministered unto him of their substance" (Luke 8:2-3).

The vision remained the same while the channel of provision changed with each stage of the assignment. If we live within the context of God's vision, provision will always be present, though it will not always arrive by the same route.

When the provision of a season dries up, God is telling us to shift our thinking and to look in the direction of the next provision. A door closes, funds stop coming in, or the resources we relied on no longer reach us, and we quickly conclude that God has left us or that everything is over. The end of a season also ends the provision attached to that season, which means we must go back to God and allow Him to direct us into the next dimension of His supply.

Every vision has a provision, and the provision is already provided. It is not waiting somewhere in the future for God to create it; it waits for our obedience to come into agreement with what He is saying, so that it can become manifest to us. When Isaac asked where the lamb was, Abraham answered, "God will provide himself a lamb" (Genesis 22:8), and the ram was already caught in the thicket when Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw it (Genesis 22:13). Abraham called that place Jehovah-jireh, and the saying grew from it, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen" (Genesis 22:14).

Whatever state we find ourselves in, there is provision for that state, and what we often need is for God to open our eyes. Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, learned this in the wilderness. Fleeing from Sarai, she met the angel of the Lord by a fountain of water and called the Lord "Thou God seest me," so that the well was named Beer-lahai-roi, the well of Him that lives and sees me (Genesis 16:13-14). Years later, cast out with her son and her water spent, she sat down expecting him to die, until "God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water" (Genesis 21:19). The well was there before she saw it. The God who sees you, and who makes you aware that you are seen, is the same God who opens your eyes to see His provision for your life.

Understanding the System of Babylon

To understand God's economic system, we first have to understand how the system of Babylon works. Some two years ago we wrote a book on God's economic system within the context of the Babylonian economic environment, and its message has only grown more relevant for anyone who wants to stand through the financial and economic disruption of this hour. The insights I share here draw from that work. One of the gravest mistakes in the Body of Christ today is our failure to understand how Babylon operates economically, since we cannot come out of a system whose workings we have never examined.

What we see happening in the Church concerning provision shows how far we have allowed the values and ideologies of the world to run our lives. We claim to serve the Lord, yet we draw our security and our sense of the future through the world's system of provision. As I wrote in that book, who or what defines our provision determines who we worship, because provision and worship were never separate matters in Scripture. Jesus placed them side by side when He said, "No man can serve two masters... Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). He spoke of mammon as a master we might serve, and He gave it no place as a neutral tool in the hands of a divided heart.

The Two Battles of the Last Days

The battles of the last days are tied to two things, and in many ways they already are: the economy and worship. John saw both joined in one scene, where the beast caused all "to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark" (Revelation 13:16–17). The mark governed commerce, and in the same passage it demanded worship. Babylon has always understood what the Church often forgets, that whoever controls a person's access to buying and selling holds a claim on that person's allegiance.

When I speak of worship here, I mean more than bowing before a god or an idol. Worship includes what defines our time, what consumes our energy, and what shapes our sense of existence. If ninety percent of our time in a day, a week, or a month goes to the workplace, then the workplace has quietly become the altar where our lives are offered. As challenging as this is to hear, Babylon does not measure our worship by the building we enter on Sunday; it measures our worship by what captures our attention and where our hours are spent.

I am not saying the workplace is unimportant or that work is evil. God gave Adam work in the garden before the fall (Genesis 2:15), and Paul told the Colossians, "whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23). Work offered to God is worship. The problem begins when whatever takes the greater part of our time, energy, and resources gains control over the rest of our lives, so that we labor for a master other than the One we confess.

Let My People Go

God framed His demand to Pharaoh as a matter of worship: "Let my people go, that they may serve me" (Exodus 8:1). Israel's bondage was economic, yet God named the purpose of their release in terms of service. The Hebrew word *avad* carries both meanings, to work and to worship, and the whole contest in Egypt turned on whom Israel's labor belonged to.

Pharaoh's response reveals how Babylon's system thinks. When Moses first asked that the people go and hold a feast unto the Lord in the wilderness, Pharaoh accused them of idleness and commanded, "Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein; and let them not regard vain words" (Exodus 5:9). He withdrew the straw and kept the quota of bricks. His strategy was to fill every hour with labor until the people had neither time nor strength left to think about God. Our worship is tied to our service, our skill, our creativity, and our life as families, and any system that seizes all our time seizes all of these with it.

The Freedom of Time

Many of us are not financially free, and our freedom to worship God is bound to that liberty more closely than we admit. If we lack the time and the means to worship God the way He desires, we end up worshipping something else by default, even while our hearts love Him. Sometimes the idol is nothing more than the thing our time is spent on.

We speak often of freedom of expression, freedom of information, and democratic systems designed to protect our liberties, yet we rarely speak of the freedom of time. Many of the things we long to create, the assignments we sense God calling us to build, and the businesses we want to run remain undone because our time is chained to our income. Many are born into an ecosystem of poverty, and poverty sets its own terms: unless you do this or that, you cannot do what you were made to do. So we give ourselves to work, telling ourselves that once we have made enough we will finally have the time to serve, and the longer we go the more we discover that such time never arrives.

God addressed this within His own law. When He gave Israel the Sabbath, He tied it directly to their deliverance from bondage: "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence... therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day" (Deuteronomy 5:15). A slave cannot stop working, while a people set free can rest. The Sabbath stood as a weekly declaration that Israel's time belonged to God and that their provision did not depend on unbroken labor.

The manna carried the same lesson into the wilderness. God gave bread from heaven every morning, enough for each day, and on the sixth day He gave twice as much so that the seventh could be kept holy (Exodus 16:4–5, 22–26). Those who hoarded found their surplus bred worms, and those who went out on the Sabbath found nothing. Heaven's economy tested whether the people would trust God enough to stop gathering, while Babylon trains us to gather without ceasing because it teaches that nobody else will provide.

The Shaking of This Hour

If we are going to advance the purpose of God, we must understand how His economic system works, because He is shaking everything that can be shaken, down to its foundations. The writer of Hebrews saw this: "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven... that those things which cannot be shaken may remain" (Hebrews 12:26–27). We will feel this shaking more as time goes on, because those who control the systems of this world have no interest in a people with the liberty of time to do what God has called them to do.

The disruptions of our day have reached into the economic, financial, and leadership sectors, and many are finding them difficult to manage. The longer we move through this season without breaking out of the economic bubble, the more anxious we will become about the future. Haggai prophesied into a similar shaking and recorded the Lord's reminder, "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts" (Haggai 2:8). The shaking falls on the systems we have leaned on, while the Owner of the silver and gold remains where He has always been.

Many of us will need to sit down in the spirit and think deeply. By thinking I mean meditation, considering before the Lord where we stand and which direction leads into the realm of heaven's provision. God's way of providing differs from the ideologies and patterns of thinking we have absorbed, which is why His leading sometimes makes no sense to us. We rush to rationalize His direction through humanistic, worldly reasoning, though He has already told us, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8).

Provision on a Different Axis

We must come to a new understanding that heaven's system of provision operates far beyond what we call financial security or prosperity, especially in an age of financial crisis. The Father provides for His own, and He does so through His presence and His favor. Markets rise and fall, institutions change their policies, and leaders make decisions nobody anticipated; the provision of God moves on a different axis because it flows from who He is rather than from the conditions around us.

David watched this across a lifetime when he wrote, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psalm 37:25). He had lived as a shepherd, a fugitive, and a king, through famine, war, and exile, and through every economic condition the faithfulness of God held constant.

Knowledge, Skill, and the Source Behind Them

God requires that we carry the best knowledge, skill, wisdom, creativity, and understanding we need to engage life and interface with the world around us. His word never excuses laziness, incompetence, or ignorance: "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings" (Proverbs 22:29). The continual upgrading of our knowledge and skill is important, yet we must know where our power of provision lies.

Moses reminded Israel that "it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:18), and the statement cuts in two directions at once. The power is real, so we must develop and use it; the power is given, so we cannot claim it as our own. When God prepared Bezalel to build the tabernacle, He said, "I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship" (Exodus 31:3). Even craftsmanship came to Bezalel as an endowment of the Spirit.

Everything that allows us to function within a scope that secures our provision comes from Him. Our abilities and skills are instruments, while our trust must rest on the One who gave them. Once we confuse the instrument with the source, we begin to measure our future by the strength of our hands, and when our hands weaken our hope collapses with them. The Psalmist saw this clearly: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it" (Psalm 127:1).

The Voice That Leads to Provision

Our trust must be rooted in the voice of God, because His voice leads and guides us to the place of provision. In this season our provision will depend less on our ability to create something for ourselves and more on our willingness to place our hope and trust in Him. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). Following presupposes hearing, and hearing presupposes a relationship close enough for His voice to be familiar.

When we fail to understand the economic system operating in our days, frustration becomes the force that drives our lives. We strive, calculate, and recalculate, while the outcome keeps slipping beyond our reach, because we are working a system God never asked us to lean on. Understanding God's economic system leads us into an understanding of His financial provision. We need provision, and God has promised it, though He supplies it through means far beyond our thinking and far beyond our expectation.

Solomon's counsel still stands: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). God gives us understanding and expects us to use it, yet our understanding must never become the thing we lean on. We use our minds while placing our confidence in the Lord, and we keep our ears open to His voice even while our hands are busy.

From Cherith to Zarephath

The life of Elijah shows us how this system works in practice. In the middle of a drought that Elijah himself had declared, God spoke: "Get thee hence... and hide thyself by the brook Cherith... and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there" (1 Kings 17:3-4). Provision waited at a specific place, and Elijah found it through obedience to a specific word; the ravens were commanded to feed him there and nowhere else.

Then the brook dried up, while Elijah stood exactly where God had sent him. He had done nothing wrong. The same God who led him to Cherith spoke again and sent him to Zarephath, a Gentile town in the region of Sidon, to be sustained by a widow (1 Kings 17:9). Sidon was the homeland of Jezebel, the queen who would later seek his life, and nobody would expect to find provision there. The widow herself had only a handful of meal and a little oil, and she was gathering sticks to prepare a last meal for herself and her son before they died. Provision still came, because provision comes from God, and the prophet who listened and followed found it in the least likely place.

When a source we have depended on begins to fail, our first instinct is to dig deeper into the dry bed or to panic, though the drying of the brook is often the very moment God speaks the next instruction. Elijah did not leave Cherith because it failed him; he left because the word of the Lord came to him again (1 Kings 17:8).

The word of the Lord to the widow was, "The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth" (1 Kings 17:14). That word came with an instruction to make the prophet a little cake first, from the very meal she thought would be her last (1 Kings 17:13), because God's economy often asks us to act on His word before we see His supply. He provides in the darkest hours, in the very situations where it seems nothing is left for you and your household to eat. His word over the earth has not changed: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Genesis 8:22). The cycles of provision He established remain in force, and the drought of one season does not cancel the covenant faithfulness of God.

The Favor That Brings the Rain

What we need in this season is the favor of God. His favor causes His blessings to shine upon us, as David prayed: "For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield" (Psalm 5:12). Favor surrounds us where our own strength cannot reach. Joseph lived inside a foreign economy as a slave and later as a prisoner, yet "the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour" (Genesis 39:21), and that same favor eventually set him over the storehouses of Egypt in a time of famine.

The favor of God also causes the rain we need to fall on our parched land. Solomon wrote that the king's favor "is as a cloud of the latter rain" (Proverbs 16:15), and Moses promised that the Lord would "open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand" (Deuteronomy 28:12). The rain comes from heaven, while the blessing lands on the work of our hands. God's economic system joins the two, so that our labor becomes fruitful because His favor rests upon it.

Seven Stress Tests for Our Financial Life

A financial stress test asks how a system holds up when pressure arrives. Scripture applies the same examination to our hearts long before the markets do. Whether we have much or little, these seven tests reveal whether our trust rests in the Lord or has drifted back into Babylon's system. Each test also carries a response we can practice when the shaking reaches our own household.

The First Test: The Source of Our Confidence

If our income stopped tomorrow, our peace would go wherever our trust already lives. Anxiety is often the first sign of where our confidence has been resting. Moses warned Israel against the day they would say in their hearts, "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:17). Paul charged the rich "that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17).

This test examines those who lack as closely as those who have plenty. We can trust in the salary we do not have as much as in the one we do. Fear of lack still measures life by money, only through its absence. When the shaking comes, we return to the Source before we reach for the calculator. Jesus answered the anxious question "What shall we eat?" by directing us to "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:31-33).

In practice, every financial decision begins in prayer, because we acknowledge Him in all our ways before He directs our paths (Proverbs 3:6).

The Second Test: The Altar of Our Time

Our calendar tells the truth about our worship more plainly than our confession does. We need to ask where the hours of our week go, and what remains for God, for family, and for the assignment He has placed on our lives. Pharaoh kept Israel from worship by raising the quota of bricks. If our schedule has no room left for God, our finances already hold a claim on us, whatever our income may be.

The response is to guard the Sabbath and give God the first portion of our day, even when pressure tells us we cannot afford to stop. God commanded Israel, "in eaving time and in harvest thou shalt rest" (Exodus 34:21). He commanded rest in the very seasons when stopping seemed most costly. Beyond keeping that rest, we ask the Lord to show us the path toward the liberty of time. Many remain bound because they have accepted their bondage as permanent and have never sought Him for a way out.

The Third Test: The Voice Behind Our Decisions

Every financial decision obeys some voice, whether fear, advertising, the expectations of people around us, or the voice of God. The test asks whether we would recognize His leading if it came, and whether we would follow it when it made no sense to our reasoning. Elijah found provision at Cherith because he went where the word sent him.

When the brook dries, we stop and listen before we start digging. Elijah moved to Zarephath only after "the word of the Lord came unto him" (1 Kings 17:8). God still promises, "thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it" (Isaiah 30:21). In seasons of shaking, write down what you sense the Lord saying. Test it against Scripture and bring it before godly counsel, "for in the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14).

The Fourth Test: The Appetite of Our Lifestyle

Babylon survives by manufacturing desire, because a people who always want more will always work more. This test asks whether our wants have outrun our calling, and whether our spending serves our assignment or our image. Paul wrote that "godliness with contentment is great gain," and warned that "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare" (1 Timothy 6:6-9). The snare often begins with an appetite we never examined.

When pressure comes, we simplify. We separate what we need from what feeds our image, and we release what Babylon persuaded us we could not live without. Paul learned "both how to be abased, and how to abound" (Philippians 4:12). The writer of Hebrews ties contentment directly to the presence of God: "be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

The Fifth Test: The Claims on Our Future

"The borrower is servant to the lender" (Proverbs 22:7), and every debt pledges our future hours to a master other than God. This test connects directly to the altar of our time, because debt spends tomorrow's labor before tomorrow arrives. In Nehemiah's day the people mortgaged their fields and vineyards and brought their sons and daughters into bondage just to buy corn (Nehemiah 5:3-5). We need to ask honestly who holds a claim on our future and how much of our liberty we have already signed away.

During a shaking, we refuse new chains, especially debt taken on to keep up an appearance. We also seek the Lord for a path out of the obligations we already carry. The widow whose creditor came to take her sons received oil multiplied from the vessel already in her house. Elisha then told her, "Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest" (2 Kings 4:7). God's provision cleared the debt first and then sustained the household. Paul's standard remains: "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another" (Romans 13:8).

The Sixth Test: The Openness of Our Hand

Generosity exposes trust faster than any other test, because giving releases what Babylon tells us to clutch. If we give only from surplus, our giving depends on conditions rather than on God. The widow of Zarephath made the prophet's cake from the meal she believed was her last, and her barrel never ran empty through the drought. Solomon observed that "there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty" (Proverbs 11:24).

The response is to keep sowing when the shaking comes and to honour the Lord "with the firstfruits of all thine increase" (Proverbs 3:9). The Macedonian churches gave out of "a great trial of affliction" and "deep poverty," and their giving "abounded unto the riches of their liberality" (2 Corinthians 8:2). We give as the Lord leads, with wisdom and without manipulation, while keeping our hand open toward the One who keeps His hand open toward us.

The Seventh Test: The Readiness of Our Stewardship

God expects diligence, skill, and foresight. This test asks whether we are faithfully preparing with what He has placed in our hands. Joseph gathered grain in the years of plenty against the years of famine (Genesis 41:35–36). The ant "provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest" (Proverbs 6:8).

Joseph's storehouses differed from the manna that bred worms, and the difference lay in the word of God. Joseph stored because God had revealed the famine, while Israel hoarded against God's instruction. Saving under His direction is stewardship; accumulating out of fear returns us to Babylon's anxiety. In the parable of the talents, the servant who buried his talent confessed, "I was afraid" (Matthew 25:25). Fear produced the very loss he tried to prevent.

When the shaking comes, we keep working what is committed into our hands. We keep upgrading our skills, and we spread our labor and resources wisely. Solomon counselled, "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth" (Ecclesiastes 11:2). He also wrote, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that" (Ecclesiastes 11:6).

Doing What Is Committed Into Your Hands

So keep your hope in the Lord. Keep doing what you need to do, and give your best to what God has committed into your hands, while letting your trust rest in Him alone. Coming out of Babylon's system seldom means abandoning our work overnight; it means refusing to let that work become our master while we listen for the direction that leads us into the liberty of time and worship God intends for His people.

Paul assured the Corinthians that "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8). He will direct all grace toward you. God will provide for you, so be encouraged, and be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.