

THE END TIMES

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Through the tears of many we hear, “WHY, GOD, WHY?”



Hope

BEYOND THE TERROR

On September 11, 2001 the world looked on in horror as thousands trapped in four airliners, the Twin Towers, and the Pentagon fell victim to religious fanaticism. This reprehensible act of terrorism has profound implications not only for the United States, but also, for all the families of the earth. Humanity has now discovered how truly helpless we are, and somehow we all know that this world will never be the same again.

Such terror as the world has just witnessed tests the faith of everyone, and we hear through the tears, “My God, Why? How could you let this happen?” Yes, terrorism is an elusive foe driven by fanatical minds and fueled by hatred, misinformation and prejudice. One needs only to look at the tiny Nation of Israel to see this horrible reality played out almost every day. And now, the rest of world is experiencing firsthand the fear of living our day to day lives in expectation of yet another terrorist attack. What lies upon the world’s horizon? The Scriptures not only predict this terrible trouble, but offer substantial hope beyond the fire and terror.

TODAY’S HEADLINES WRITTEN NEARLY 2,000 YEARS AGO

God in His foreknowledge could look down to our time and see the hate and greed in the human heart that would escalate into the devastating worldwide violence of our day. God’s Word predicted that a great increase of knowledge would be accompanied by an unprecedented “*time of trouble.*” (Dan. 12:1-4) During this

trouble, “*the weak say I am strong.*” (Joel 3:10) Just so, a few, “*the weak,*” have terrorized The Superpower of the world. Yes, today we are living in an unparalleled time of trouble and “*men’s hearts [are] failing them for fear...*” Luke 21:26

The prophet Daniel gave four signs that would mark the “*time of the end,*” or end of the world as we know it (Daniel 12:1, 4):

One sign brought forth is that “many shall run to and fro.” Today, through advanced and numerous modes of transportation millions are crossing and recrossing each other’s paths around the world. In the past 100 years, man has increased the speed of travel from 30 mph to 25,000 mph. Sophistication in communications, additionally, allows man to see and hear anywhere in the world instantly.

A second sign is that “knowledge shall be increased.” The statistics of our day are impressive. More than ninety percent of all scientists who have ever lived are alive today, and more than fifty percent of the world’s inventions have been created within the last two decades.

A third sign is that the Lord would “stand up” for Daniel’s “people.” If we are living in this “*time of the end,*” we should expect a dramatic evidence of God’s favor on behalf of the Jewish people. Indeed, historians agree that Israel’s rebirth is a miracle of history. Never before has a nation been destroyed, its people dispersed to the ends of the earth and then—nearly 2,000 years later—regathered to their homeland, and re-established as a nation.

The fourth sign, an unprecedented “*time of trouble*,” is the hallmark of our time and is confirmed by these recent tragic events. True, the world has always had trouble, but prior to 1900, the potential for the annihilation of humanity by the single flick of a switch was unheard of. The possibility for devastation at the hand of man is staggering.

During the 20th Century, 175 million were slaughtered by the “*politics of insanity*”—terrorism and oppression. In the first three quarters of the 20th Century at least 100 million lives had been lost to war (TIME, Mar. 9 '70). Thirty-four wars were being waged in 1988 alone. Many Third World nations have chemical weapons and nuclear warheads. And the threat of inventive terrorism upon random world targets looms every hour. Such volatile weaponry in the hands of unstable regimes and radical religious factions is global disaster waiting to happen.

FREE-WILL: A HARD LESSON

Wars, terrorism, violent crime, drugs, pollution, the population explosion and economic chaos punctuate Daniel’s vision of unprecedented trouble in our time. Indeed, our generation is experiencing “*a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.*”

There are two primary sources for the evil in the world today. One is man’s own prideful, selfish ambition and the other is like unto it—Satan and his demonic host. The fact that God has not prevented evil is evidence that He has reason for its permission. God desires mankind to live in peace, harmony and happiness. He knows this will only happen as each individual practices the principles of righteousness and selfless love; otherwise, evil will result with its consequences of suffering and unhappiness.

God desired the human race to have *free-will*. The planetary systems move in mechanical obedience; the animal creation is driven mainly by instinct; and God could have programmed the ideal man to never disobey, but man would be no better than a robot. God desired man to live in harmony with both his Creator and his fellow man out of sheer appreciation for the principles of righteousness. God knows it is only as man is fully motivated by the principles of righteousness, that he can really gain happiness for himself and be in an attitude of concern for the happiness of others.

God was willing to bestow free-will, fully aware that it would cost Him dearly before man became fully responsible to this freedom. The anxious parent knows the inevitability of his child touching a hot stove before learning the consequence of heat. All through life, parents will admonish

their children, knowing that they will only learn certain lessons the “*hard way*”—by experience. Just so, God knew that man would not comprehend His warning about sin and its dire consequences. Out of love, He formulated a plan whereby man, by his own choice, might first experience the results of disobedience. Then, in God’s kingdom, mankind will experience the fruitage of righteous obedience. This contrasting experience will manifest, as no other process could, the beauty and righteousness of God’s law and the dreadful consequences of its violation.

The third chapter of Genesis is the divinely provided history of man’s free-will choice. God instructed man that if he practiced righteousness, he would live forever.

If he disobeyed, then death would be a process of sorrow and suffering culminating with the grave. Note well that death, not eternal torment, is the penalty for sin. (Genesis 2:17; Psalms 146:4) Like the child and heat, man did not know what suffering and death were. He disobeyed, and God is now giving him a controlled experience with evil. Thus we read, “*This sore travail has God given to man to be exercised therewith.*” Eccl. 1:13; 3:10

Man’s travail with evil is for a purpose, that he might be exercised or taught certain lessons by it. God has allowed evil for the purpose of showing the “*exceeding sinfulness of sin*,” but there will soon come the time when He will say, “*Peace, be still.*”

THE ULTIMATE REMEDY

The depth of God’s wisdom is shown in His foresight to devise a plan that provides for man’s free choice and experience with evil, but nevertheless brings redemption through Christ which will result in eternal happiness. Speaking collectively of the human race, the Psalmist said, “*in sin did my mother conceive me.*” (Psa. 51:5) The Apostle Paul in Romans 5:12 says, “*By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*” Thus, the whole human race is born dying.

The process of recovery from sin is called redemption in the Bible. Redemption simply means the release from sin and death through the payment of a price. The thought is similar to the release of a person in prison when a benefactor pays the fine that the prisoner could not afford.

I Timothy 2:6 speaks of Jesus’ death as “*a ransom for all to be testified in due time.*” The word “*ransom*” is a translation of the Greek word *antilutron* which means corresponding price. When Father Adam sinned, death passed upon him and the prospective human race. Deliverance from death required the



payment of a corresponding price, the death of a perfect man. Only the perfect man, Jesus, who was “*holy, harmless, separate from sinners*” could provide such a price, thereby redeeming Adam and his offspring from the penalty of death. (Heb. 7:26) Thus Paul in Romans 5:18 says, “*Therefore as by the offense of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [Jesus] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.*”

THE “RESIDUE” OF MANKIND

But what of those who do not accept this payment for sin now? Christ was “*a ransom for all to be testified in due time.*” There are two primary phases of God’s redemptive plan. The first is the selection of Christ’s Church which is taking place during this present evil arrangement. The test of faithfulness is refining their characters to the end that they might be able ministers of those who were not capable of accepting Christ now. Note the words in Acts 15:14-17: “*God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name [the true church]. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, after this I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue [remainder] of men might seek after the Lord, ...*”

Note the point that a small group, “*a people for His name,*” is selected first out of the Gentiles. During the Christian Age, the Lord is only converting a few, a “*little flock*” “*who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, honor and immortality.*” (Rom. 2:7) These are elsewhere symbolically referred to as the bride of Christ. Next, the “*tabernacle of David,*” which was an Old Testament illustration of the Kingdom of Christ, is set up again. After Christ returns, these believers will be united with him, and then will begin the conversion of “*the residue of men*” [the rest of mankind—NAS version]. Revelation 22:17 prophesied of that time: “*And the Spirit [the returned Christ] and the bride [the true church] say, Come [to the residue of men]. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that thirsts come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*”

Since the vast majority of the human race went down into their graves without hearing or understanding the “*ransom for all,*” the Kingdom will require the raising of the dead. And this is just what Jesus tells us in John 5:28. “*Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good to a resurrection of life and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment.*” (RSV) Note again the same pattern of sequence. All will be raised from the dead—first, “*they that have done good,*” the true church. During Christ’s return they

will be raised to spiritual life and united with their heavenly Lord. Then will follow the resurrection of the “*evil*” class, all the remainder of men. Billions of mankind before and after Jesus’ earthly ministry died without receiving the light of Jesus. They will come forth to a “*resurrection of judgment.*” The King James Bible, translated in A.D. 1611, grossly mistranslated the word “*judgment*” with the word “*damnation.*” The American Revised Version in 1881 used the word “*judgment,*” and no translation since has used the word “*damnation.*” The trial time, or “*due time*” for the church is in this present life, and they gladly accept the ransom price paid on their behalf. But the trial time of the remainder of mankind will be at the resurrection in

the Kingdom. There will be no obstacles in the way of salvation during the glorious reign of Christ and his Church. Isa. 35:8-10

God intends to change man’s selfish, stony heart into a loving heart. The Kingdom of Christ will rule in righteousness, and the “*knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the deep*” so that all will know the Lord. (Isa. 11:9) All “*the inhabitants of the earth will learn righteousness.*” (Isa. 26:9) Satan will be bound so that he cannot deceive the people. (Rev. 20:1-3) The love of God will abundantly bestow blessings of life, peace and happiness upon all. Yes, the influence of this Kingdom arrangement will have an overwhelming transforming effect on the hearts of men. Of this mighty working we read, “*And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh:*

That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.” Eze. 11:19-20

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS SHALL COME

We have great cause to rejoice, for even though things will get worse before they get better, it is the severity and hopelessness of the world’s problems that mark us at the threshold of the promised Kingdom blessings. Just as urban renewal requires the demolition of the old, so the full establishment of Christ’s Kingdom requires the removal of our old, corrupt civilization. (Heb. 12:28) At the end of the thousand-year Kingdom, as mankind stands at the threshold of eternity, they will look back upon this present life of suffering, sickness and sorrow. And though this experience seems dark and interminable at present, then, by contrast with eternity, it will have been worth the education. Just as the terror of today was prophesied, the resurrection of all who have ever lived is also assured in prophecy. Then, all those who perished in the terror of today will be reunited with their loved ones. This present generation will see the Kingdom in all its glory. Luke 21:21-32; 1Cor. 15: 22



HOPE BEYOND THE TERROR

Speaking of this present time of great distress, Haggai prophesied, *"I will shake all nations and the desire of all nations will come."* After the tribulation of this present evil world has demonstrated that selfish man cannot establish his own utopia, God will bring about the full establishment of His Kingdom and the *"desire of all nations."*

What are some of these desires? Ask the homeless family living in times of unemployment, *"What is your desire?"* their answer would be, *"If only we had a place to call home."* The Kingdom promise: *"They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit. They shall not plant and another eat."* Isa. 65:21-23

What would be the desire of the critically ill? Of course, they would say, *"If only there were no sickness and crippling diseases, no cancer, no blindness, no pain and suffering."* Thank God! These desires will be fulfilled in His Kingdom: *"And no inhabitant will say I am sick."* *"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, then shall the lame*

man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy." Isa. 33:24; 35:5

And what would be the desire of the young man on the field of battle, *"If only man could learn to live in peace."* The Kingdom promise: *"They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation neither shall they learn war anymore."* Micah 4:3

Ask the mother of the young man killed at the hand of a terrorist, *"What is your desire?"* and she will say, *"If only I could hold him again."* Yes, the most blessed promise of all, lost loved ones will be united once again in the resurrection. *"I will ransom [deliver] them from the power of the grave..."* (Hosea

13:14) *"And the ransomed of the Lord shall return with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."* Isa. 35:10

These are but a few of the desires which shall be satisfied. This is the promise of God's Kingdom to come, where His will shall be done on earth, as it is even now done in heaven.



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