

# Assurance for All People

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## THE WORDING OF OUR

title would seem to imply a ray of hope for mankind in today's perplexing world. Certainly, some assurance of better times is needed now more than ever before, especially in light of wars, riots, increasing crime, political polarization, economic uncertainty, social upheaval, and a breaking down of the moral standards of the people. Today's world does not present a pretty picture, and the outlook for the future is a dim one.

In vain we look for some sign in the events occurring around us to indicate that one day there will be a change, that the human race will awaken to its present calamitous course in time to save what is called civilization from a complete collapse. We must look elsewhere to receive this assurance. There is a source of information which reveals the

relationship of the past to the present and, as a beacon light, points the way through the darkness to a new day of promise—a time of blessings for all assured to us by the great Creator of the universe.

## **SIN AND DEATH**

Today, our only source of real hope is the Bible. However, if this great book is to mean to us what it should, we must accept it for what it claims to be, which is the Word of God. This source of hope and assurance informs us that our first parents were created in the image of God. This means that they were perfect and endowed with the divine qualities of love, sympathy, and understanding. If the earth were filled with such people there would be no war, no crime, no oppression—none of the ugly evils which afflict mankind today.—Gen. 1:27,28

These perfect specimens of humanity were asked to obey divine law and were informed that disobedience would lead to death. (Gen. 2:17) They disobeyed, and the death sentence fell upon them. Soon trouble began. Cain murdered his brother Abel, and rampant murder still continues. The downward course of the human race has been constant. The record reveals that less than two thousand years after the fall of man “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”—Gen. 6:5

The Flood destroyed that evil social order, but shortly afterward sin and selfishness again began to increase, and every generation has experienced its terrible results. There have been wars and other distressing manifestations of the fact that the human race is indeed fallen and incapable of

stopping the downward drag of sin. The Bible attests to this, as do the pages of secular history.

## **RELIEF PROMISED**

In every generation, however, there were a few who endeavored to maintain their belief in God, and who tried to stem the tide of human selfishness. Abraham was one of these, and God counted him as a “friend.” (James 2:23) God made a wonderful promise to Abraham, assuring him that through his “seed,” or progeny, all the families of the earth would be blessed. When Abraham demonstrated his complete faith in God by his willingness to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice, God confirmed this promise by his oath.—Gen. 22:15-18; Heb. 6:13-18

This promise was passed on to Isaac and later to Jacob, the grandson of Abraham. Later God changed Jacob’s name to Israel. (Gen. 32:28; 35:10) When Jacob died, it became the heritage of the nation of Israel as a whole. To the devout of Israel this promise to Abraham was the basis of their hope in a coming Messiah. (Ps. 105:6-45; Mic. 7:20) As they understood it, the Messiah would establish a powerful government in Israel—one which would reach out and bless all the families, or nations, of the earth.

The greatest event ever to take place in the earth up to that time was the birth of Jesus, who had been sent into the world to fulfill the Messianic promises. Yet, like many of the good things which occur in the world today, the birth of Jesus received little publicity at the time. No doubt the shepherds, to whom the announcement of Jesus’ birth was made by the angels, did what they could to spread the news. However, this was meager publication of

an event so important to mankind. The wise men who came later were greatly impressed, and they probably spread the news to some extent. Perhaps the greatest notice the birth of Jesus received was in connection with Herod's attempt to destroy the child by the slaughter of all the Hebrew children in that area. Thus, as is the case today, the good was temporarily overshadowed by the evil.

Regardless of how much or how little attention was given to the birth of Jesus at the time, one of the greatest events in history had occurred. It was as a shining beacon of hope in the nighttime of human experience, for the one whom the Creator had promised to be the deliverer of mankind from the devastating effects of sin and death was born. To be sure, he was born in a humble manger, but his birth was announced by the holy angels. His destiny was to be a Wonderful Counselor, a Mighty God, an Everlasting Father, and The Prince of Peace.—Isa. 9:6,7

## **MESSIAH AND KING**

Jesus was also born to be the great Messiah and King of promise. His disciples believed that this was his destiny. In fact, they expected him to set up his kingdom immediately and, through the authority given to him by God, to first deliver Israel from the Roman yoke of bondage, and then to take over the rulership of the world. However, while Jesus demonstrated by his miracles that he was capable of accomplishing the divine will, the disciples saw little or no evidence of a new government being formed under his leadership.

What they did see was increasing opposition to Jesus by the religious rulers. This opposition reached

a climax as a result of his awakening Lazarus from the sleep of death. (John 11:43,44,53) The disciples did not understand Jesus' attitude in the face of the rising tide of hostility. He told them he intended to go to Jerusalem and expected to be arrested and put to death. They could not harmonize this with their expectations concerning their Master. Peter advised Jesus not to go to Jerusalem, and later he tried to prevent his arrest by the use of the sword.—Matt. 16:21,22; John 18:10,11

This was all in vain. Jesus was determined to give himself up to his enemies, although he could have asked his Heavenly Father for the help of the holy angels had he believed it to be the divine will for him. (Matt. 26:53,54) Though their hearts were anguished, the disciples could do nothing to turn aside the tide of events. Their Messiah, their King, was arrested, brought before priests and rulers to be falsely tried, spat upon, beaten, to have a crown of thorns placed upon his head, and to be nailed to a cross, where he was allowed to die. His death was accompanied by a great earthquake, and the "veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom." (Matt. 27:51, *American Standard Version*) There also came a darkness over the land, symbolic of the darkness of sin and death which this one who had been sent of Jehovah came to earth to dispel.—Luke 23:44,45

## **THE REDEEMER**

It was by the sacrifice of his life that Jesus provided redemption from sin and death for all mankind. In addition to being the future King of the world, he was now the Redeemer of the human race.

(Mark 10:45; John 3:16,17) At that time, however, the disciples did not understand this, and they were bewildered by the fact that their Master had allowed his enemies to put him to death. Their great joy over his birth and miraculous ministry had been eclipsed by a frustration and sadness occasioned by his death.

The faith of the disciples was so firmly established in the fact of his Messiahship that they paid little attention to certain of his statements indicating that he expected to die at the hands of his enemies. How could this happen to their Messiah? Nevertheless, when he was crucified they recalled vaguely his promise that he would be raised from death on “the third day,” and they clung to this as their last hope.

Early in the morning of that third day certain women went to the tomb to complete the embalming of Jesus’ body, and they found the tomb empty. An angel explained that their Master was not there, that he had risen. The women were instructed to go and tell his disciples that he was no longer dead. (Luke 24:1-10) Later the same day, Jesus appeared as a stranger to two of his disciples walking to Emmaus, and upon his asking them the cause of their sadness they explained what had happened and added, “We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.”—vss. 13-24

From the prophecies of the Old Testament, Jesus pointed out to these two disciples that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and die, and that the promises of his glory as Messiah and King would be fulfilled later. After Jesus disappeared from their

sight these disciples said to each other, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"—Luke 24:25-32

Doubtless the hearts of all the disciples burned within them when they became convinced that their Master had been raised from the dead. However, few aside from Jesus' own dedicated followers believed that this great miracle had occurred. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was the most remarkable and wonderful event in world history. Yet relatively little attention was given to it; and the good news concerning it as proclaimed by his faithful followers fell upon deaf ears.

### **ITS COMMEMORATION NOW**

On the last Sunday in March the resurrection of Jesus will be once again commemorated by hundreds of millions. There will be much rejoicing, expressed by inspirational music and colorful gatherings. Most churches will have their largest attendance of the year, and eloquent sermons will be preached. With this, however, the real meaning of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is still unknown by the majority of people. Indeed, many who preach on that day will themselves be unaware of the true significance of the resurrection of Jesus, as will their congregations.

There were three great events associated with the coming of Jesus into the world, and all of them give assurance and hope for this poor, groaning creation. The first, of course, was his birth; the second was his death; and the third was his

resurrection. Without the death of Jesus, mankind would continue to remain under condemnation to death, and therefore there could be no dawning of a new morning of joy for the human race. However, because Jesus did give his life a ransom for all and thus made provision for the setting aside of the Adamic death sentence, that heart-warming promise of Psalm 30:5 will yet come true: “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” The great fact of Jesus’ death as man’s Redeemer will yet be made known to all mankind.—I Tim. 2:3-6

## **ASSURANCE THROUGH HIS RESURRECTION**

A dead Redeemer could not deliver mankind from death; neither could a dead King rule over and bless all the families of the earth, as God had promised Abraham. (Gen. 12:3) So the next great step in the outworking of the divine purpose for human salvation was the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The Creator, the Heavenly Father, demonstrated his power to fulfill his promises by raising Jesus from the dead. (I Cor. 15:20; Phil. 2:9) This shows that nothing can successfully interfere with the accomplishment of his loving design for the uplift of the human race from the degradation caused by disobedience to his law.

Truly, then, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was an assurance of a new day, a foregleam of hope for a distraught and dying world of mankind. In the present dark world of chaos and suffering the people in general are without a true knowledge of God. God knows this, and the Apostle Paul explains that he has “winked” at this



ignorance. When, however, the Lord's "judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." (Isa. 26:9) That time of judgment is future. Concerning it, and quoting again our opening text, the Apostle Paul explains that God has "appointed a day," that is, a period of time, "in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man [Jesus] whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."—Acts 17:30,31

There is no assurance of peace and security to be found anywhere in the world today. Certainly weapons of war give us no assurance or hope. Medical science is accomplishing great things, but human wisdom will never be able to destroy death. Education has become more general throughout the world, but little is being taught concerning the principles of God and his plan.

Only when we look to God's plan of salvation as represented to us in his Word, can we have real hope. In that plan Jesus is the Prince of Peace, the future judge of the people, and the "true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." (John 1:9) In him we see the new and righteous King of earth and the great Messiah of promise. Thus we have the assurance that the whole plan of the Creator, centered in Jesus, will become a glorious triumph in the earth because the Father raised him from the dead. May the commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus inspire us all with a greater desire than ever before to tell the whole world the blessed tidings of the kingdom centered in him! ■