

Divine Intervention Near

***“In the days of
these kings shall
the God of heaven
set up a kingdom,
which shall never
be destroyed.”***

—Daniel 2:44

THE SCRIPTURES TEACH

that the only permanent solution to the world’s many problems will come as a result of divine intervention in the affairs of men. Two events this year—the ongoing world-wide Coronavirus pandemic, and the widespread social and political unrest both in this country and abroad—have brought heightened consideration of whether the solutions to these and other problems plaguing mankind can only come by means of a higher power than any earthly leader, government or institution.

While many may contemplate the need for divine intervention on man’s behalf, not many are able to exercise such a faith, hence they continue to look to human devices and plans to resolve the world’s myriad problems. Relatively few believe the promises of God’s Word, that Messiah’s kingdom is soon to be established on the earth, bringing peace and happiness to all mankind. Jesus intimated that

there would be a lack of faith at this time and raised the question, “When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”—Luke 18:8

Sincere students of the Bible know that in the past God has intervened in world affairs. Thus, they can have confidence in his promises to do so again. To these, the world’s hopes for the future are as bright as the promises of God. These promises are exceedingly bright, and assure us that the Sun of righteousness will “arise with healing in his wings,” bringing life and joy to all. (Mal. 4:2) Such a faith can permit us to rejoice, even in the midst of present turmoil.

THE FLOOD

At the time of the flood, in the days of Noah, God intervened in the affairs of men and the result was the ending of a world: “The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.” (II Pet. 3:6) Jesus, in his prophecy of circumstances that would exist in the earth at the present time, referred to the days of Noah, and used conditions prevailing then to illustrate what was to take place now. In keeping with this, the Bible makes it plain that divine intervention at this time also results in the ending of a world: “this present evil world.”—Gal. 1:4; II Pet. 3:7

The destruction of the world that existed before the flood did not destroy the earth, nor will the overthrow of Satan’s world at this time destroy man’s earthly home. Rather, God will establish a new world, or order of things, described by the Apostle Peter as a “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” (II Pet. 3:13) This means that if we truly want God to intervene and resolve the chaos

of the present world, we should be prepared to consider what he has foretold as the only solution for the distressed nations—namely, the replacement of all fallen human arrangements and institutions by the kingdom of Christ.

JESUS IS BORN

The Christian world claims to believe in the miraculous birth of Jesus as the world's Redeemer, Savior and Messiah. For two millennia the refrain of the heavenly host has been repeated, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:13,14) Are we now to conclude that the Creator has lost concern for the people living on this planet? True faith says: Certainly not. Surely God is just as interested now, and as fully able, as he was when he sent his only begotten son into the world, to intervene in world affairs and to establish order in the place of present trouble and distress. This is what God has promised to do, and, therefore this should be the blessed hope of all true believers.

Thirty years after his birth Jesus entered upon his ministry, one which was characterized by miracles. Not only did he affirm that he had come to begin fulfilling the Messianic promises of the Old Testament, but he backed up his claim by providing samples, through his miracles, of what his future kingdom would do for the people when finally established worldwide. He healed the sick and raised the dead, and this God has promised to do on behalf of all mankind when he answers the Christian's prayer, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."—Matt. 6:10

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

It was God's arrangement that his only begotten Son should die as man's Redeemer, hence Jesus' enemies were permitted to crucify him. Following this, God's power was wondrously manifested in raising him from death. The fact of Jesus' resurrection is one of the fundamentals of Christian belief. If we accept this truth it should not be hard to believe that God is able to use his power to complete his program of blessings for the people. It would be inconsistent to believe otherwise.

Fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus came the miracle of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit, or power of God, was poured out upon the waiting disciples, enabling them to carry on with the program of miracles introduced by the Master. Paul warned, however, that these miraculous "gifts" of the Holy Spirit would cease in the church, and they did. (I Cor. 12:29-31; 13:8,13) Nearly two thousand years have passed since, hence it is no wonder that so few are now able to believe in miraculous, divine intervention.

Miracles have continued throughout the present age, but these have been mostly miracles of grace in the hearts and lives of individual Christians. God has worked mightily in his church, preparing its members for future association with Jesus in the glory of the Messianic kingdom. However, the world in general has not been aware of this. The footstep followers of Christ have appreciated it only because, by faith, they have been able to look at and understand things unseen by the natural eye.—II Cor. 4:17,18

God's plan for these is that they be exalted to heavenly glory and reign with Jesus in the Messianic

kingdom. (Gal. 3:8,16,27-29; Rev. 20:6) Through this kingdom arrangement the remainder of mankind are to receive blessings of health, life and peace upon the earth. Many have overlooked the fact that heavenly promises are made only to the church, a “little flock,” and do not, therefore, represent God’s plan for humanity as a whole. (Luke 12:32) As a result, the general idea has developed that present conditions here upon the earth are to continue indefinitely, and that God’s interest in the people is primarily to save as many of them for heaven as possible.

This, however, is not God’s plan for humanity. Since the death and resurrection of Jesus, God’s work in the earth has been that of preparing the followers of his Son for their share in his kingdom. Hence, there has been very limited interference in the course of the world in general. God foretold this period of silence in the affairs of men, saying, “I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once.”—Isa. 42:14

AS TRAVAIL UPON A WOMAN

Not only does God explain that for a long time he would refrain from interfering with the downward course of man, but he also reveals the manner in which his silence would be broken—namely, that he would “cry like a travailing woman.” This, of course, does not mean a literal or audible cry. God explains what he means, saying in the remainder of the text, “I will destroy and devour at once.” The preceding verse is also enlightening. It states: “The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir

up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies.”—Isa. 42:13

The symbolic language of these verses denotes that the first thing to expect when God breaks his silence is a time of destructive trouble upon the systems and institutions of earth. The Apostle Paul presents a similar thought, employing also the symbolism of a travailing woman as mentioned in the foregoing passage. Paul says, “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.”—I Thess. 5:2,3

While it is inevitable that many people lose their lives in this prophetic time of destruction, yet primarily it is a world order that is to be destroyed, to be replaced by a new, righteous kingdom. In the symbol of travail, we have the suggestion that the trouble would come in spasms, continuing until the birth of the new order. Through certain fulfillments of prophecy, as well as by events of history, these spasms of “travail” started to become most notable beginning at the time of the First World War.

Since that time, further spasms of trouble have come upon the world. These have been of different kinds. During the past century, we have seen additional wars, economic depression, recessions, revolutions, political upheavals, social instability of many kinds, and even religious turmoil, all of which give witness to the passing of a world. These processes continue today, and they are working exactly as the prophecies indicate they would, as “travail upon a woman with child.”

There may yet be brief periods of easement, but the present world, under the rulership of Satan, must give way to the kingdom of God under the leadership of Christ. The Scriptures assuredly promise that eventually a new world will emerge from the trouble. It will not be fashioned by man, but by God. As stated in our opening text, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: ... It shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."—Dan. 2:44

DIVINE METHOD OF INTERVENTION

God's method of intervention is not spectacular nor supernatural, but nevertheless it is most effective. The spasms of trouble often come upon the world unexpectedly, "as a thief in the night." God's strategy is such that the very things which people may hail as products of their own wisdom, and which they imagine will bring them peace and safety, are in reality tools which help bring to an end the present world order. That is why the apostle foretold, "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction shall come upon them, as travail upon a woman with child."

One important aspect of divine intervention in the affairs of this world is that of increasing knowledge among the masses of mankind. Accompanying this has been the explosion of technology and the availability of instantaneous communication among the people. One can easily see the close relationship between these conditions and present world chaos. However, few as yet recognize that the increase of knowledge is by divine appointment. It is referred to by the

Prophet Daniel, who said that in the “time of the end,” many would “run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” This prophecy also associates the increase of knowledge with a “time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.”—Dan. 12:1,4

The increase of knowledge is symbolically foretold in the Book of Psalms by the use of the term “lightning.” We read, “His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled.” (Ps. 97:4) Note how the trembling of the earth’s present social order is here shown to result from God’s “lightnings.”

When Jesus was asked what would be the signs of his second coming, he explained that “as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall the coming (Greek: *parousia*, meaning presence) of the Son of man be.” (Matt. 24:3,27) The word translated “lightning” in this passage has the thought of enlightenment from the heavens. It is the Greek word *astrape*, from the root word *aster*, meaning “a star.” Inasmuch as Jesus emphasized that the light of his presence would shine from the east to the west, it means that in this respect it would be like the light of the sun, the earth’s star—a worldwide diffusion of light, affecting all humanity.

In II Thessalonians 2:8,9, the “brightness” of Christ’s coming [*parousia*: presence] is again mentioned. Here, the effect of this bright shining is shown to be the destruction of the great systems of iniquity which have come about by “the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.” The dissolution of all systems founded by this archenemy of God is a necessary prerequisite to the establishment of the Messianic kingdom.

Such are some of the prophetic references which indicate that God intervenes in world affairs at this end of this age by causing a great increase of knowledge to reach the people. What this increase of knowledge has done, and is continuing to do to a world order, is a matter of record, clearly discernible to those who are acquainted with the fundamental causes of present world distress.

The increase of knowledge, in bringing to light the hidden things of darkness and superstition, has started the masses of mankind on the march to supposed freedom, and toward what is perceived as "rights" of every conceivable kind, whether real or only fancied. Such things lead presently to confusion, and even anarchistic conditions, but these, too, are signs that the old order is crumbling. We thank God, however, that this is not to be the end result of the increase of knowledge peculiar to these last days. While the first effect of the bright shining of Christ's presence is that of making the earth "tremble," the light will continue to increase until, under the ministration of Christ's kingdom, it will bring health, true freedom, and everlasting life to all mankind.

The fullness of light and knowledge resulting from the presence of Christ and the establishment of his kingdom is described, as previously noted, as being like the sun—"the Sun of righteousness," which arises "with healing in his wings." From east to west that sun will shine, and upon every continent and the isles of the sea the soothing, life-giving powers of divine light will be felt for the good of all people.

With God's new world established, the enlightenment will continue until it embraces every phase of

human experience, including a true understanding of the Creator as a God of wisdom, justice, love and power. Concerning this the prophet declares, “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”—Isa. 11:9

In order for the people to then obtain the blessings of the kingdom it will be necessary for them to render willing obedience to the knowledge they have received. What wondrous blessings will come to those who obey! Divine power will fly to their aid to assist in their full recovery from sin and death, and to bless them with life everlasting. Full obedience to the knowledge which will then fill the earth will mean a turning from selfishness to love; from war to peace; from riches for some and poverty for others, to plenty for all. Every person will dwell “under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.”—Mic. 4:1-4

ALL ENEMIES DESTROYED

Divine intervention at this time means the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, and the Apostle Paul explains that Christ will reign until all enemies are put under his feet, the last enemy to be destroyed being death. (I Cor. 15:25,26) This means that more is to be done for the people than to merely put a stop to war, social unrest and economic hardship. If in the past it has seemed that God has not been interested in the welfare of humanity simply because he has not answered all their conflicting prayers, let us remember that it is because he has been developing a much more far-reaching program for the everlasting future of the world and its inhabitants.

The prophet declares that Christ shall reign as “The Prince of Peace,” and “of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.” (Isa. 9:6,7) This will mean universal and everlasting peace among the nations and within nations; peace in every community; peace in every family; peace in every heart; and, above all, peace between God and men. Without this latter peace, indeed, there could be no genuine peace of any kind.

With peace between God and men established by Christ, the great Mediator, and based upon the merit of his atoning blood, all the other blessings promised by the Lord will flow to the people in a never-failing “river of water of life, ... proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.” In the revelator’s symbolic description of kingdom blessings flowing to the people he tells us that on either side of this symbolic river will be the trees of life, and that the leaves of the trees will be for the healing of the nations.—I Tim. 2:5,6; Rev. 22:1,2

When the final spasm of the great “time of trouble” will have finally prepared the people for the kingdom of Christ, how much they will need to be healed! (Zeph. 3:7,8) They will rejoice when they realize that all the honorable and righteous blessings they have been made to desire by the increase of knowledge are provided for them, and much more. In this kingdom there will be spread for all nations and peoples a “feast of fat things,” the prophet declares.—Isa. 25:6-9

Among the “fat things” is listed the fact that God will “wipe away tears from off all faces.” To wipe away all of mankind’s tears will require the awakening of the dead. This, too, is on the agenda

for God's new world. Knowing that he would raise the dead in his own due time, God has permitted the world to continue on its downward way into death while he has been preparing the kingdom agencies, the "sons of God," for their future work. (Rom. 8:19) Now that preparation work is about complete. Already God has broken his silence, and the present world under Satan's dominion is being shaken to the core, and will not stand, but will soon be replaced by a "kingdom which cannot be moved." —Heb.12:26-28

The sincere and honest-hearted of the world are planning as best they can in order to keep the present order afloat. How happy they will be when they learn that God has done the planning for them, and that his plans are even now unfolding. Ere long they will result in the setting up of the long-promised kingdom of Christ. Let us continue to pray for that kingdom, in the realization that the answer to our prayers will mean the fulfillment of the legitimate "desire of all nations." (Hag. 2:7) When we pray for the kingdom we are praying for divine intervention in world affairs in the only way that God will answer. His kingdom is nigh at hand. Let us continue to pray for its soon establishment, that it might bring to an end "earth's weary night" of sin, suffering and death. ■