

Quietly Waiting for Salvation

“It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.

—Lamentations 3:26

THIS SCRIPTURE IS TAKEN

from the Lamentations of Jeremiah the Prophet. At the time he wrote these inspiring words, he was wailing in misery over the sorry state of Israel, and the experiences that his people had recently endured during the destruction of their city Jerusalem, and their having been taken captive to Babylon. He speaks as an eyewitness of that historical account.

An interesting preface to the first verse of his Lamentations may be found in the *Septuagint Bible*—an ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. It gives an indication of the tragic events that had taken place, and Jeremiah’s consequent sadness. The preface is not generally included in our English Bibles, but is referenced here to provide a historical perspective, and to establish the mood of the time. It reads, “[It came to pass after Israel was taken captive, and Jerusalem made desolate, that Jeremiah sat weeping, and lamented with this lamentation over Jerusalem, and said. . .].”—Lam. 1:1

JEREMIAH SUBMITS TO GOD

The context from which our featured text has been selected suggests Jeremiah's willing submission to the Divine will and his readiness to put all matters pertaining to his people in the hands of his loving Heavenly Father. The prophet reverently trusts God as revealed in his writings. "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD."—Lam. 3:22-26

A LESSON IN WAITING

As we continue to wait for the salvation of the Lord, and the long-promised kingdom of truth and righteousness to be established over the earth, the world anxiously enters another new year. It looks forward to the ominous predictions concerning further threats to the peace and stability of nations, and it is impossible for anyone to accurately predict what the next twelve months will bring. Meanwhile, the poor sin-sick and dying world of mankind wait in ignorance for the kingdom of Christ to bring them truth and peace, which is the only answer to the world's present dilemma.

EARNEST EXPECTATION

Waiting for Christ's kingdom, however, proves to be a difficult lesson, not only for the human family, but also for the Lord's people who continue to pray for that time of blessing to come for the world. In

his epistle to the Romans, the Apostle Paul puts this time prophecy in perspective. He says, “Indeed, the earnest expectation of the creation longs for the revelation of the sons of God.”—Rom. 8:19, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*

The apostle is here pointing to the whole human creation who continue to wait, although yet unknowingly, for the completion of the body of Christ, ‘the revelation of the sons of God.’ When this faithful church class is complete, they will participate with our risen Lord as Mediator of the New Covenant, and will together share with him in blessing the world during his future kingdom.

Paul explains further, “We know that the whole creation groans together and travails in pain together till the present time. And not only it, but ourselves also, possessing the first-fruit of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for sonship, the redemption of our body.” (vss. 22,23, *WED*) Paul thus confirms the level of patient anxiety that even the Lord’s people—those who have responded to the spiritual call during this Gospel Age—are experiencing as they, too, await the coming kingdom.

PERILOUS TIMES

While we ‘hope and quietly wait,’ as the words of the Prophet Jeremiah encourage us to do, we know also that the last members of the body of the church must faithfully finish their courses in death so that the blessings of Christ’s kingdom can be made available to the human family.

Bible prophecies that speak of our day foretell it as a time of increasing violence, evil, and corruption within all aspects of the present social order.

The Apostle Paul describes some of these conditions, which portray our day, and enumerates the signs in his letter to Timothy. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."—II Tim. 3:1-4

World statesmen, political and religious leaders, as well as everyday citizens today will acknowledge that we are now living in a very dangerous world. Based on the prophetic writings of the Scriptures, we see the deterioration and instability in world affairs as inevitable signs of the end of this present age. We watch the acceleration of violence and turmoil that will ultimately remove this social order in preparation for the future kingdom of Christ that will bring blessings of life and happiness to mankind. The Lord's people recognize the signs of the times, and know that the kingdom is drawing near. Nevertheless, we are often anxious for it's arrival.

A YEAR OF TURMOIL

Looking back over the year that is just ending, we note that United States government policy has failed in many respects to deal satisfactorily with the rising tide of violence and chaos that now plagues the world. They are also facing overwhelming problems that confront their own nation. There have been many serious setbacks that the Bush administration has had to confront during the past year.

WAR IN IRAQ

The war in Iraq, now well into its fourth year, continues to plague the American government. It consumes huge amounts of money, raw materials and machinery, while the numbers of slain and maimed American servicemen and women steadily rise. Iraqi military and police personnel are also being killed nearly every day by suicide bombers and other methods of destruction on an increasing level. Meanwhile, its citizens are being murdered in violent and grotesque fashion in large numbers.

Religious factions within the country are moving dangerously closer to all-out civil war and with no immediate strategy to curb it. The United States-backed Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki has been unable to make his country's security plans work, and the United States military have had to postpone its intended plans to begin a timed withdrawal of American troops from Iraq. This is all happening despite declining public support in the United States for the war, as well as the growing demands from Congress to plan for a phased withdrawal. At the time of this writing, it appears that United States military forces will need to remain in Iraq for an indefinite period of time.

WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

It is now over five years since the United States-led military invasion removed the Taliban from political power in Afghanistan. The militant Islamic group is now remobilizing, and is proving to be a highly resilient enemy force once again. Suicide attacks are on the rise and are spreading their death and destruction to the capital city Kabul.

President Hamid Karzai's credibility in his native land is being undermined by some of the bloodiest and deadliest fighting since the Taliban's fall. He has failed to control the illicit drug trade in his country, and there are wide disparities between his people, the rich and poor.

TURMOIL IN IRAN

Despite United Nations demands, the Iran government, under its recently elected President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has continued to accelerate its nuclear program. The United States, one of the main forces within the United Nations, has exercised its role as a world leader in proposing stiff penalties and sanctions against Iran for its defiance.

Tehran, on the other hand, has taken advantage of the situation and has sought to undermine the fragile, United States-built consensus that is underway to persuade other members of the Security Council to impose meaningful penalties on Iran for its lack of compliance. Ahmadinejad no doubt believes that President Bush and his government will not be successful in its attempts to persuade other member states on the Council to take action on the matter.

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

It is increasingly doubtful whether any meaningful prospects for peace have taken place between Israel and its Palestinian neighbors during the past year. Former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon remains in serious condition from a stroke which he suffered at the beginning of the year. His successor, Ehud Olmert, has admitted that there are political problems following the inconclusive war that

Israel fought with Hezbollah militants in Lebanon during the summer.

Political crises followed the victory of Hamas militants during the Palestinian elections in which Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas was greatly weakened. Hamas' victory was also a serious setback to the present American administration's goal to spread democracy in the region.

ISRAEL-HEZBOLLAH WAR

In July 2006, Israel's Prime Minister Ehud Olmert responded to the kidnapping of two of its military personnel by members of the Hezbollah militia, with immediate and overwhelming force which lead to a month-long bloody and full scale war between the two factions. After bitter fighting, which included the use of rockets being fired daily into northern Israel, a truce was negotiated with the aid of the United Nations, but it has left a fragile situation until the next conflict begins.

It was generally believed within the Israeli Cabinet that the Hezbollah terrorists were strongly supported by both Iran and Syria who have demanded the ultimate destruction of the state of Israel. There continues to be growing contention toward the Jews from its neighbors and long-term enemies, which is a major concern and one of the main causes of dangerous and unstable conditions in the region.

NORTH KOREA

During the year now ending, the weapons agreement which had been announced in the previous year's United Nations opening session broke down, and this communist nation's government has since boycotted talks with the United States and other

nations as a result. During the summer of 2006, North Korea tested its missile systems, including their long-range missiles that theoretically are capable of reaching west coast targets in North America. Later in the year, North Korea tested its first nuclear bomb, and has indicated their intention of further tests. Their ultimate plans appear to include the development of missiles that are capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

THE MEXICAN BORDER

In October 2006, the United States President signed a controversial bill, "The Secure Fence Act 2006," that would establish a 700-mile fence along its border with Mexico. This represents approximately two thirds of the two-thousand-mile border, which the United States Congress considers to be porous, and one that could be used by terrorists coming into the country undetected.

The bill allows for tighter controls against illegal immigration, including the use of troops, the hiring of more immigration officials, and border patrol agents. The government has allocated \$1.2 billion dollars for construction of the fence, and the building of access roads, vehicle barriers, and lighting. High-tech equipment such as infrared remote cameras, satellites, and unmanned aerial vehicles will also be used.

The new strategy has come about in the wake of increasing criticism over gaining operational control of the border and the great numbers of illegal aliens pouring into the United States each year. During the past year, it is estimated that border patrol agents have arrested over a million people attempting to

enter the country illegally. There is also concern to stop illegal commercial activities as well, including human trafficking and drug and weapons smuggling. There are 43 points of entry that are linked to the major United States highway system.

NATURAL DISASTERS

One year after the costliest and most devastating natural disaster in the history of the United States, which struck in August 2005, the wreckage inflicted by hurricane Katrina is still prevalent in some Gulf Coast areas, particularly in the city of New Orleans. At the time of the disaster, and shortly thereafter, there was talk about rebuilding, but many areas of the city that were totally destroyed remain abandoned.

The disaster has left lingering questions as to why the government of the United States, the most powerful nation in the world, was unable to cope with the damage which was inflicted on the citizens of one of America's major and most famous cities during their time of need. Many speculate as to whether or not it will ever fully recover. The funds allocated by the federal government to rebuild have been less successful than hoped for.

There is no doubt that hurricane Katrina has fundamentally changed the city of New Orleans and its displaced people, many of whom have permanently relocated elsewhere. Former residents have no intention of returning to their former neighborhoods, some of which remain in much the same condition as when they were forced to leave.

POPULATION EXPLOSION

Along with our review of some of the major news items that occurred during the past year, we also note

the Population Reference Bureau's estimate that in 2006 the world's population was 6.4 billion. This is a huge increase since 1900 when it was only 1.6 billion, and the Bureau further estimates it will reach 9 billion by the mid 21st century.

Another interesting statistic relates to the milestone that was reached by the United States in 2006. In October, the number of people living in the country reached 300 million, adding another 100 million to the population since the mid 1960's. This gives the United States the distinction of being the third fastest growing nation in the world, behind China and India. It is also estimated that the population of the United States will reach 400 million by the year 2040, and 500 million by 2065.

The question that is asked is what impact this population explosion will have on the human race globally in the next few decades. No one can doubt that it will have devastating effects on our already overcrowded cities, transportation, and school systems. It will also tax our energy supply, as well as food, water, and air resources. Efforts will no doubt be made by man to stabilize this tremendous growth, but few consider the powerful hand that our Heavenly Father will use to bring all things into harmony with his purposes and to make all things glorious.

THE KINGDOM NEAR

When Jeremiah wrote that it was good to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord, there is little doubt that he understood the magnitude of his words, and the wonderful kingdom for which the world now awaits many centuries later.

We note that the prophet used two different words which are translated “wait” in the context of our featured scripture under consideration. In the first instance he said, “The LORD is good unto them that wait for him.” (Lam. 3:25) Here the word ‘wait’ means to expect, or to wait, with the thought of endurance, or to remain with strength.

In the second instance, Jeremiah used two words, ‘quietly wait’ to emphasize his point. (vs. 26) He used the word quietly to suggest tranquillity, or to be safe and secure. The word wait as it is used in this verse means with stillness, or silence. Putting the prophet’s thoughts together we have the wonderful encouragement to put our complete hope and trust in the great God of our salvation. We must trust him to fulfill all of his promises in due time, and it is good that we continue to wait upon him.

GLORIOUS PROMISES

The household of faith has learned through trial and error to put their complete trust in the Heavenly Father’s will, not only in connection with their own experiences in life, but also concerning man’s ultimate recovery from sin and death, and the prospect of a restored earth and its people.

The time of trouble that the world is experiencing will bring an end to the present social order, and prepare mankind for the great events of the future under the administration of our Lord Jesus and his faithful followers, to bring truth and peace to the nations. As we enter into another new year, let us faithfully continue to both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. ■