

America's Health Care Dilemma

“Whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.”

—Mark 6:56

gives us a glimpse of the tremendous excitement that was generated whenever our Lord Jesus presented himself to members of the poor groaning creation. (Rom. 8:22,23) He was the long-awaited and promised Messiah who left his heavenly abode as the Word [*Logos*, Greek] of his Heavenly Father. (John 1:1-4) The Father's commission was that he take on the life of a perfect man, and then sacrifice that life as a corresponding price for the sins of Adam, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”—I Cor. 15:22

During his earthly ministry, Jesus preached to the people about the promises of a future kingdom in which he and a little flock of faithful followers would share in bringing blessings of life, health,

peace, and happiness to all the families of the earth who had inherited the penalty of death from father Adam. (Gen. 22:16-18) The many miracles of healing the sick and the infirm, casting out demons, and raising the dead that he performed, served as mere illustrations of a far grander and more extensive work that he would carry out for the whole world during his future kingdom.

IT WAS VERY GOOD

During the beginning period of earth's creation and the preparation for its earliest inhabitants—the animal kingdom—God declared that “it was good.” (Gen. 1:24,25) Then it came time for the crowning glory of this magnificent scene by the giving of life to father Adam. The Heavenly Father invited his only begotten Son, the Logos, to share with him in this wonderful work. Thus the proclamation, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” (vs. 26) With the creation of a perfect man, God then declared, “Behold, it was very good.”—vs. 31

DISOBEDIENCE

From the earliest written scriptural records of Moses, we read, “The LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”—Gen. 2:15-17

When obedience to the Divine commandment failed, sin was introduced into the world and Adam

suffered the penalty of death which would then be passed on to his offspring. “Unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”—Gen. 3:17-19

A THOUSAND-YEAR DAY

When Adam was disobedient to the law of God we realize that he did not die on the very ‘day’ in which he was created, as the scriptural record seems to suggest. However, later in the account we learn exactly just how long his granted lifespan was. “All the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died.” (Gen. 5:5) To put this all in proper focus, we learn that the Heavenly Father looks upon a day as being a thousand years long. This is shown by the Apostle Peter, who wrote, “Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”—II Pet. 3:8

Thus we have the necessary information that when Adam died at 930 years of age it was still well within God’s designated one-thousand-year day spoken of as the penalty for disobedience. Methuselah was a descendant of Adam and of the eighth generation. He lived the longest of any of the human

family, yet he, too, died within the Heavenly Father's one-thousand-year day. "All the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years: and he died."—Gen. 5:27

THE DYING PROCESS

God's commandment to Adam was, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen. 2:17) An added perspective to this verse, and the Heavenly Father's warning concerning failure to obey his commandments, is recorded in the Marginal Translation of this scripture. It reads, "dying thou shalt die."

These words are important because they introduce more clearly the thought of a dying process rather than an immediate death. As seen within the concept of God's one-thousand-year day, this distinctly points to the gradual nature of the death sentence. If Adam had been obedient to God's laws he would have continued to live but, because of his condemnation to death, he lost more and more of his original vitality that ended in the grave 930 years later.

The record of mother Eve's creation follows soon after Adam's. (Gen. 2:18-25) Later, our first parents were vividly reminded of the reality of the sentence of death when a dispute arose between two of their sons which ended in violence and the death of Abel. Leading up to the controversy was God's acceptance of the sacrificial offering of Abel as having more worth than Cain's. Jealousy prevailed, "And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that

Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.” (Gen. 4:8) What a tragic scene transpired when the human family’s first murder had taken place.

From that time forward, mankind’s record is written in sorrow and blood as the momentum of sickness, disease, accident, war, and other violence has brought continuing misery and disaster to the whole human family over the course of its six-thousand-year history. Jesus’ earthly ministry and promise was to establish life and peace once again during his future and glorious kingdom for the uplifting and blessings of all mankind. That blessed time will also include a resurrection from the grave.

PREPARING THE WAY

John the Baptist had been the forerunner of our Lord Jesus and he had helped prepare the way for the Master’s earthly ministry. “[He] preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.” (Mark 1:7) When it was time for Jesus to begin his ministry his power and fame quickly spread far and wide. Multitudes of the sin-sick and dying human family sought his miracle-working powers of healing. “This rumour of him went forth throughout all Judaea, and throughout all the region round about. And the disciples of John shewed him of all these things.”—Luke 7:17,18

JOHN’S REASSURANCE

Luke, the historian records some of the important details that took place about this same time. John was seeking reassurance that it was indeed our Lord Jesus of whom he had been hearing. “John

calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? And in that same hour he [Jesus] cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight.”—Luke 7:19-21

MIRACLE-WORKING POWER

Luke recorded the conversation that took place between Jesus and the two disciples sent by John the Baptist. We read, “Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.”—Luke 7:22,23

Jesus thus defended his earthly ministry and the Divine purpose by removing all doubt as to who he was, and what he had come to accomplish. His Heavenly Father had bestowed upon him great powers for the healing of sickness and disease, and strength for the redeeming work and ultimate reconciliation for the sins of the world. However, the wonderful work he was engaged in was but a mere foregleam of the much grander blessings that would become available to the whole sin-sick world under the administration of his future kingdom.

PRESENT DAY HEALTH CARE

There is little doubt that the present health care system in the United States is the best that fallen

man has ever been able to offer to the poor groaning human creation. Although much progress has been made in health sciences to help alleviate some of the terrible suffering that is endured by mankind, a return to perfect health, life, and freedom from the death sentence can only be achieved through the administration of Christ's coming kingdom.

This prospect can never be realized by man, as the Apostle Paul proclaims. "We know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body."—Rom. 8:22-24, *New American Standard Bible*

Paul is pointing to a future time, which we believe is now near at hand, when the completion of the faithful members of the body of The Christ will soon be accomplished. They will then share in the dissemination of blessings that will be offered to all the obedient of mankind during the time of Christ's earthly kingdom.

AMERICA'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

As of this writing, it seems likely that there will be major changes made to improve the present health care system in the United States under the new Obama administration. At the present time it is held mostly in private hands. However, millions of people have no health insurance at all and this country's system is the most expensive of any other nation.

There are certain facilities owned and operated by various governmental agencies but there is no nationwide system of government-owned medical facilities that are open to the general public. The few exceptions include the federally controlled military hospitals, both field and permanent, which are operated in connection with the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration.

America's hospitals and their staff of doctors and other personnel are usually funded by various insurance plans that are held by their patients. It is estimated that about 85% of United States citizens are covered by some kind of health insurance. Some of this coverage is provided through an employer program which may be available to them, or by other individually purchased plans. There is at present no government health insurance plan that covers all people, and there are nearly 50 million people who do not have a health insurance policy.

SPIRALING COSTS

United States government economists estimate that health care spending will nearly double over the next decade, and this is prompting major concern that American citizens will not be able to keep pace with these cost increases, and that they will outstrip the nation's economic growth. A recent statistical report prepared by the Journal of Health Affairs is available for last year, and points to a health care bill that now averages approximately \$7,500 for every man, woman, and child in the United States. The report stated that this accounts for about 16 cents out of every dollar that Americans spend. If

costs are expected to nearly double in the next few years the increased costs will put added pressure on the United States Congress to either curb Medicare benefits, raise taxes, or more likely to do both. Health care expenses will thus put a burdensome strain on everything else the government does.

Another report by the government's Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services has concluded that the United States spends far more on health care than other advanced nations but with little or no measurable results. The excessive costs are generally attributed to higher administrative expenses, drug prices, doctors' incomes, and other factors with no single factor being entirely responsible. Basic health care costs such as hospital care and doctor's services are expected to rise at relatively modest rates of six to seven points a year over the next ten years. These rates are one to two percentage points higher than the forecast growth for the overall economy. As health care spending is predicted to increase faster than earnings, it means that more people will be unable to afford adequate protection.

Analysts point to the fact that as the United States moves from the more traditional sources of insurance to more federal and state provided programs, we will continue to face difficult questions as to how we can finance the present health care expenses.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

The newly installed Obama administration and the United States Congress have been working to pass legislation that will overhaul the American

health care system. It is an exceedingly complex issue and it has eluded lawmakers for decades. There are no guarantees that an agreeable solution can be reached that will satisfy all major political alliances and financial interests, but it is hoped that some kind of a compromise may be found.

The basic goal of any new congressional bill is to provide health care benefits to the nearly 50 million uninsured Americans. At the same time, they also want to make the system more stable and affordable for those who may already have insurance through their employer or by other means. As the situation is now, to lose a job means to lose coverage. The aim is to lower insurance premiums for everyone, and as a result the young and the old, and the sick and healthy can be brought into the system as a way to spread the costs of high-risk patients. The present unresolved problem remains how to compel participation in the program, and then how to pay for it. Any package of options designed to achieve these goals however, would require hundreds of billions of dollars in new tax revenues and spending cuts that have yet to be worked out.

HUGE COSTS

The proposed health care overhaul is estimated to cost in excess of 1 trillion dollars over a period of ten years. It has been suggested that some of this cost could be obtained by a tax levy on benefits provided by employers which could amount to \$200 billion annually which are not at present subject to taxation. Both liberal and conservative lawmakers support the change. Democrats and Republicans

agree that the government must exert more pressure on Americans to buy into the new program. Unions who fought for years to obtain generous health benefits for their workers are not in favor of the changes because they would have to pay taxes on their benefits.

Establishing a public insurance plan that competes with private insurers remains a contentious aspect of the whole reform debate. The Democrats hold all of the cards in the debate however. Because they have a very popular president, they dominate the House and now have a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate. They also can use the reconciliation procedure that would allow them to pass a bill with 51 votes if an agreement cannot be reached.

LEGISLATION DELAYED

United States President Barak Obama has been pushing hard for quick passage of a bipartisan bill that he can sign that would expand health care coverage for all Americans. It is believed by many that he is seeking fast action before his first year of high level popularity begins to wane. In the meantime, minority Republican leaders and some of Obama's own Democrats are delaying quick passage of a bill before the historic changes to the health care system are finalized. As of this writing, it has been confirmed that there will be no Senate vote before Congress adjourns.

There are many doubts concerning additional costs to taxpayers and the government's takeover of America's health care system. Many are insisting that slowing down is the wisest course to follow at this time. Also, many say that it is better to have

a bill that is based on carefulness rather than to rush the issue. The creation of a government-run plan would compete with private insurance companies, increase taxes on the wealthy, and require employers and individuals to obtain health insurance.

It appears likely that President Obama may have to settle for some kind of a fallback strategy in order to overhaul America's health care system. Democratic lawmakers hope for action by the full House, and some sort of agreement on a bipartisan plan in the Senate. However, Republicans are repositioning their strategy and opposition, and some Democrats in both chambers of the House are voicing doubts about moving such complex and costly legislation too quickly.

GOD'S SOLUTION

Students of the Bible know that the only solution to the overwhelming problems facing the human family in these distressing times at the end of the present Gospel Age lies in the wonderful promises of God's Word. For six thousand years man has inherited the penalty of death that has come to them because of disobedience to the laws of God and original sin in the Garden of Eden. This penalty is witnessed by the corruption, sickness, and disease that ends in the grave.

Under the administration of Christ's future kingdom men will be given every opportunity to learn the ways of the Lord and, if obedient to the law of God, will receive everlasting life here on a perfected earth. "Then he [God] is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom. His flesh shall be fresher

than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth."—Job 33:24,25

These inspiring words from the Word of God speak of a future scene when righteousness and Truth will prevail over all the earth and the human family will be witness to the marvelous features of God's promised kingdom. Tears of joy will surely accompany the reality of this blessed promise when the poor groaning creation realize that they have the opportunity to return to the days of their youth.

THE OPPRESSED SET FREE

The Psalmist David was overjoyed with the wonderful prospect of God's promises, and he wrote, "Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed."—Ps. 103:1-6

The oppressed will be set free from their bondage to sin and death, as addressed by the Prophet Isaiah when he wrote, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?"—Isa. 58:6

The prophet continued to speak of the blessings that will become available to mankind in that wonderful day of Christ's future kingdom. "Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring

the poor that are cast out [broken, Margin] to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morn-ing, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward.”—vss. 7,8

Isaiah described our Heavenly Father’s ultimate purpose for the blessing and reconciliation of the whole sin-sick and dying human creation. He wrote, “The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.”—Isa. 33:24

