

“In the Last Days It Shall Come to Pass”

“In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, ... for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”
—Micah 4:1,2

FROM THE STANDPOINT of mankind’s wisdom, what the future holds for the human race is at times dreadful and at other times promising. This paradoxical situation is due to man’s inability to solve the growing problems in the world. Neither is he able to sustain those things which at times show promise for man’s future. For many people, this

is a cause for growing perplexity, anxiety and distrust. Conversely, others hope that possible catastrophes can be averted through science or the efforts of the world’s well-meaning statesmen. Such is the uncertainty with which human wisdom views the future.

The Bible alone presents us with an accurate depiction of the things which would come to pass during the time in which we presently live, “in the last days.” It has forecast the present “distress of nations, with perplexity,” and a “time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.” (Luke 21:25,26; Dan. 12:1) From these Bible prophecies we understand that this distress and trouble will not touch just one or two countries, but rather it will impact all nations.

The Scriptures also present us with a preview of the ultimate outcome of the present world distress. This broader viewpoint of that which is to take place as a consequence of events during the “last days” is most encouraging. God’s promises include the bright prospect of the establishment of his long-promised kingdom throughout the earth under the rulership of Christ, which will bring peace, joy and everlasting life to all who obey its righteous laws. The writers of both the Old and New Testaments, inspired by God, speak about this glorious future time, which will follow the “last days” of this present world order. (Acts 3:21) In his kingdom, the Scriptures declare, “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”—Rev. 21:4

One of the Bible’s comprehensive descriptions of the things that will come to pass as a result of the events of the “last days” is found in the context which includes our opening text. We quote the entire passage: “In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be

established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man 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

THE “LAST DAYS”

This marvelous description of a world at peace, enjoying security and prosperity, is introduced with the explanation that this new and righteous social order is to be established “in the last days.” From the standpoint of traditional theology, this would be an incongruity, for the “last days” have been long thought to signify the end of all human experience, a time when even the earth itself would allegedly be destroyed.

Belief in this unscriptural tradition is perhaps not held by as many now as in past centuries, but some still hold to it strongly. In reality, the prophetic “last days” of the Bible are actually the final days of the reign of sin and death, that period in God’s plan when the “kingdoms of this world” become the “kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ.” (Rev. 11:15)

These last days of the present age are to be immediately followed by the thousand-year period of Christ's kingdom, that "dispensation of the fulness of times," when all things are gathered "together ... in Christ."—Rev. 20:6; Eph. 1:10

It is true that the Bible speaks of much trouble taking place in the "last days." It is during this period that the foretold "time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation," occurs. (Dan. 12:1) In the various Bible prophecies this trouble is figuratively described using words such as fire, a great shaking, an earthquake, a storm, a flood, and a whirlwind. (Zeph. 3:8; Hag. 2:6,7; Rev. 16:17-21; Isa. 28:2; 66:15-18) In some respects, the foretold "distress of nations" is like all these upheavals of nature. However, if we try to interpret these terms literally, much confusion results, and we will fail to understand the true significance of these prophecies.

PREPARATION FOR THE KINGDOM

God's purpose in permitting this "time of trouble" is that by it the people and nations of earth might be humbled and made to realize their own inability to resolve the problems resulting from sin and selfishness. Only the breakdown of practically all man-made security and order throughout the earth will accomplish this. At first, many will continue to place their confidence in human governments and in other places of supposed safety, such as alliances, wealth or other man-made institutions. (Isa. 2:12-21; Rev. 6:15-17) However, the final breakdown of these presumed safety nets will ultimately cause the people to turn to the Lord as the only solution to the world's many problems.

THE LORD'S "MOUNTAIN"

The "mountain" of the Lord mentioned in Micah's prophecy is a symbolic reference to God's kingdom. It is this same symbolic mountain which is referred to by the Prophet Daniel as filling "the whole earth," and which "shall never be destroyed." (Dan. 2:35, 44,45) This kingdom will be established in "the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills," meaning that the people of all nations, great and small, will be subservient to it. Christ, God's appointed ruler, will reign "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth."—Ps. 72:8

With the establishment of this kingdom, the people, prostrate and humbled, will say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob." (Mic. 4:2) They will then recognize that God's kingdom has been established on earth, in fulfillment of the promises he made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Under the rulership of Christ, this kingdom will be the greater fulfillment of the kingdom which God established in ancient Israel, over which David was made ruler.

The kingdom of Israel came to an end when its last king, Zedekiah, was overthrown and the people taken captive to Babylon. This did not imply the failure of God's promises, however, because he had foretold this very event, saying of Israel's kingdom, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." (Ezek. 21:25-27) The "right" to God's kingdom of promise belongs to his only begotten son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus was the one destined to re-establish the "throne of David." Concerning this we read, "Of the

increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it, with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”—Isa. 9:7

In beautiful corroboration of this, the angel Gabriel announced to Mary, the mother of Jesus: “Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”—Luke 1:30-33

DAVID’S THRONE

The throne of David which is given to Jesus is not a literal chair or bench. Rather, it is symbolic of rulership and of divine authority as it will be exercised throughout the earth by Jesus during the thousand years of his kingdom reign. David’s rulership was centered on literal mount Zion in ancient Jerusalem. This fact is utilized in the Bible, in symbol, to also refer to Christ’s kingdom. Speaking prophetically of Jesus position as ruler, God said, “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.”—Ps. 2:6

On this symbolic “holy hill of Zion” there will be associate rulers who will live and reign with Christ. (Rev. 20:4) The Prophet Obadiah refers to these as “saviours” who “come up on mount Zion” at the time when “the kingdom shall be the LORD’S.” (Obad. 1:21) In addition, we read in Revelation 14:1: “A Lamb

[Jesus] stood on mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads." Verse 4 then identifies them as those who "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb."

Those with the Lamb on mount Sion have their Father's name written in their foreheads, which indicates that they are recognized as sons of God. The Apostle John, in his gospel account, said concerning the small remnant of Israel who believed on Jesus at his First Advent that they were given the right, or privilege, "to become the sons of God." (John 1:11,12) In God's plan, a fixed number had been predetermined for this high position, and the believers of natural Israel came far short of this at the time of Jesus' earthly ministry. As a result, God turned to, or "did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." (Acts 15:14) Thus, in God's arrangement, believing Gentiles as well as the faithful remnant of Israelites would be joined together as members of the class spoken of as having the Heavenly Father's name written in their foreheads.

THE LAW FROM ZION

We see then that the greater mount Zion in reality refers to Christ Jesus and his resurrected footstep followers who prove "faithful unto death." (Rev. 2:10) Exalted to kingdom authority and power, this "Christ" class will constitute the spiritual rulers in God's kingdom. In the Prophet Micah's preview of the things which will come to pass as a result of the "last days" of this present evil world, we read, "The

law shall go forth of [from] Zion.” Thus, Zion represents the kingdom authority of Christ and his exalted, faithful followers, who together will dwell on the heavenly plane of existence, having been given the divine nature.—II Pet. 1:4

Micah wrote that while the “law,” the divine, heavenly authority of the new kingdom, will proceed from Zion, the “word of the LORD” will go out from Jerusalem. This is a very revealing addition to the kingdom symbolism. Literal Mount Zion was a part of the city of Jerusalem, and the entire city was considered the capital of the kingdom of Israel. Consequently, the city of Jerusalem is used as another symbol of Christ’s kingdom.

Mount Zion in the literal city of Jerusalem represents the spiritual phase of God’s kingdom under Christ’s rule. As part of king David’s rulership which was centered in Mount Zion, there were those who participated in the functions of that kingdom who lived and served in other areas of the city. Thus, we have a symbolic basis for a further truth concerning the kingdom which is taught in the Scriptures. There will be human representatives of God’s kingdom. This class will be instruments through which the “law” from spiritual Zion is to be made known and administered to the people as the “word of the LORD,” going forth, symbolically speaking, from Jerusalem.

The representatives and instructors of the earthly phase of the kingdom will be the most exalted and honored of God among men. The individuals chosen to constitute this class will have proven their worthiness for such an exalted position prior to the opening of the Christian age at Pentecost. Having

previously been tried and found faithful during their earthly sojourn, when awakened from the sleep of death they will at once receive the reward of their faithfulness. This is the class of individuals referred to by Paul as those who endured greatly, that they “might obtain a better resurrection,” and who, at the moment of their resurrection, will be fully “made perfect” as humans.—Heb. 11:35,40

EFFICIENT SERVICE

These “Ancient Worthies,” as they have come to be called, will minister among and be seen by mankind. The glory of their perfection will serve as a constant, noble example, and all will have the opportunity to attain the same standard of perfection. The fact that these Ancient Worthies will be part of the earthly phase of the kingdom is fully attested by Jesus’ words to the unbelieving Jews who rejected him. He said, “Ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out”—that is, thrust out from a position of kingdom leadership due to unfaithfulness.—Luke 13:28

The work of the earthly phase of God’s kingdom will necessitate the establishment of a perfect government among mankind, with perfect men and women in positions of control. The Ancient Worthies will receive their instructions from Zion, the spiritual rulers of the kingdom who will not be seen by natural sight. This tremendous work will necessitate the appointment of proper educational provisions and resources of every character and kind, that thus these earthly representatives can put forth “the word of the LORD” to all the people.

This noble work of elevating the human race, by sure and steady steps, will be the high honor to which the Ancient Worthies will be appointed, and for which they will come forth prepared once the passing away of the kingdoms of this world is complete, and the binding of Satan, the “prince” and “god” of this world, takes place.—John 16:11; II Cor. 4:4; Rev. 20:1,2

In referring to those who will be “seen” in the kingdom, Jesus mentions only the outstanding ones of previous ages—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the prophets. However, in the 11th chapter of Hebrews, Paul presents a list which includes many others. He explains that time would fail him to mention all of those faithful ones of the past. (Heb. 11:32) We learn from Romans 11:4 that in the generation of the Israelites served by the Prophet Elijah there were “seven thousand” who had “not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.” We mention this to emphasize that the human representatives of the divine Christ, will, when raised from the dead, probably number many thousands, and they will be abundantly able to direct the affairs of the new government on a worldwide basis.

Those of mankind who accept this new rulership and conform their hearts and lives to its perfect standard of righteousness, will also have the privilege of cooperating in its work. This opportunity will first go to those of the natural seed of Abraham who believe and obey, the Israelites, but will soon embrace the people of all nations. Isaiah wrote that “all nations” will “flow” unto the mountain of the Lord.—Zech. 8:22,23; Isa. 2:2

In order to be associated with this new government and receive of its benefits, the people of all nations and races will have to conform to its "ways" and walk in the Lord's "paths." To do this will, among other things, necessitate the beating of "swords into plowshares" and "spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Mic. 4:2,3) No such implements of destruction will be needed to enforce respect for, and obedience to, the law that goes forth from Zion.

During the earthly phase of the kingdom of God, all who willingly follow after God's laws and principles will realize, progressively, how satisfying and blessed it is. The obedient will find the gratification of every righteous desire and ambition, as they transform their character into the likeness of God. Then, at the end of a thousand years of Christ's kingdom, when the great work of restoration will have been accomplished, those who were instrumental in that work will shine forth among their fellowmen, and they will be held in "everlasting remembrance."—Ps. 112:6

Great will be the accumulating glory of these perfect Ancient Worthies who constitute the executive branch of the earthly phase of the kingdom. However, the glory of the heavenly phase of the kingdom will be "the glory that excelleth." (II Cor. 3:10) Our human minds can approximate, but cannot clearly conceive, the glory to be revealed in the Christ class throughout the endless ages of eternity.—Rom. 8:18; Eph. 2:7-22

THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM

The grand covenant promise made to Abraham after he faithfully offered up his son Isaac in sacrifice points forward to the two phases of the kingdom which we have considered in the foregoing paragraphs. God said, “I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore.” (Gen. 22:17) The “stars of heaven” and the “sand ... upon the seashore” show God’s intent of having both a heavenly and earthly phase to his kingdom, the end result and purpose of which is that “all the nations of the earth [shall] be blessed.”—vs. 18

In Romans 11:16-24, Paul speaks of the Abrahamic Covenant symbolically as a “root” out of which fleshly Israel, the “natural branches” originally grew. However, a majority of them were “broken off” for a time, due to failing to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. Only a remnant of the Jews followed after Jesus at his First Advent. Gentile believers, “wild” branches, were grafted in after most of the natural branches were cut off because of unbelief. This root covenant bears two distinct kinds of branches, each of which, in the order of God’s plan, will bear perfect fruitage of character—first, the spiritual class being developed during the present age, and second, the earthly class to be brought to human perfection in the kingdom.

At the time it was given to Abraham, it was the earthly aspect of God’s promise which first began to be developed, through Isaac, Jacob, and the nation of Israel. However, in the order of the promise’s grand fulfillment, both as to time and to glory, it is the spiritual which is first, and afterward the

natural, or earthly. Because the prospective heirs of the spiritual phase of the kingdom have been promised “glory and honour and immortality,” their trial has been much more severe than that which mankind will endure in its future judgment day. The consecrated followers of the Master during the present age have suffered persecution for righteousness’ sake, while the obedient of the world under the arrangements of the kingdom will be rewarded for righteousness and punished only for unrighteousness.—Matt. 5:10-12; Isa. 25:8

It is because the authority and power of the divine Christ, exercised through the earthly representatives of the kingdom, will protect and bless the righteous, that it will then be possible for every man to dwell “under his vine and under his fig tree.” None will be permitted by threats of violence, or otherwise, to “make them afraid,” or to “hurt nor destroy.”—Mic. 4:4; Isa. 11:9

DEATH DESTROYED

Even death will be destroyed in the mountain of the Lord. God will “swallow up death in victory,” the prophet declares, to which Paul adds, “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” (Isa. 25:6-9; I Cor. 15:25,26) Concerning that future day of the kingdom we also read, “The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick,” because “the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.” (Isa. 33:24) The provision for this forgiveness will have previously been assured through the redemptive work of Jesus, the “Lamb of God.”—John 1:29; Acts 5:30,31

The destruction of death implies also the resurrection of those who have died. In the complete

prophetic outline of the things which in the “last days” shall come to pass, this is included. Paul said that there “shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.” (Acts 24:15) The “just” are those who make up the elect classes who are resurrected to immediate perfection, some to the spiritual plane and some on the earthly plane, to serve in the two phases of the kingdom. All the non-elect, the “unjust,” are also to be awakened from the sleep of death.

Jesus explained that these “unjust” will come forth to “the resurrection of judgment,” of which the awakening from the sleep of death will be but the first step. (John 5:28,29, *Revised Version*) These “come forth” to judgment [Greek: *krisis*]. If, during this judgment period, they willingly accept the provisions of God’s grace through Christ and obey from the heart the righteous laws of the kingdom, they will be restored to human perfection and live forever. Any who willfully disobey after coming to a full knowledge of God’s righteous laws, which we believe will be very few, will be judged unworthy of life.—Isa. 65:17-25; Acts 3:22,23

When viewed from the standpoint of the promises of God, the conditions which will finally result from the events of “the last days” are most encouraging. It will, indeed, bring the answer to every Christian’s prayer, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” (Matt. 6:10) Let us continue to offer this prayer and endeavor to be faithful in telling the whole world the good tidings of the kingdom which will soon come! ■