

God's Program of Election

***“Put on therefore,
as God’s elect
... a heart of
compassion,
kindness, humility,
meekness,
longsuffering;
Forbearing one
another, and
forgiving each
other, . . . And
above all these
things put on love.”
—Colossians 3:12-14,
Revised Version***

IT IS NOW A LITTLE MORE than two months until the United States presidential election. It has been evident throughout the campaign process, which for some candidates started nearly four years ago, that the environment surrounding this year’s election is unique in many ways. Unfortunately, this uniqueness is considered by most to be along negative lines. This has resulted in much fear and trepidation among the electorate, regardless of the outcome in November. For many, it is perhaps the most confusing and fearful election in their lifetime.

There are many factors contributing to the uniqueness of the 2016 election. First, there are the issues themselves, which have become more and more difficult, if not impossible, for leaders of

the world to get their hands around. In addition, it is clear that these problems are now coming closer to home, often affecting the lives of citizens living within our own borders, rather than taking place only in far off places.

Consider this sampling of recent events within our own country: The mass murder in June of forty-nine people at an Orlando nightclub by a single gunman, who pledged allegiance to the Islamic State; the ongoing morality issues and controversy which surround the alleged rights of the LGBT community; the unknown potential fallout economically to the United States from the United Kingdom's recent vote to exit the European Union; the decline in race relations within the country, as shown by the killing of blacks by white police officers, and in apparent retaliation, the killing of five Dallas police officers in early July; and the ever-growing problem of immigration, in which it is estimated at the present time that some 11 million people are living in the United States illegally.

This unique and daunting array of problems does not even take into account the scores of other troubles, many at crisis proportions, in the rest of the world. Indeed, it is impossible to describe in words the terrible things happening on a daily basis in this present sin-sick and dying world in which we live.

If the problems facing the country and the world are unique to today, so are the remedies proposed by the presidential candidates. Additionally, in most cases, the solutions offered by one candidate are the complete opposite of those offered by the other. One says we should build a wall to keep illegal immigrants

out—another says we should be inclusive of all who enter our borders. One says that the mass killings we have witnessed in recent months should result in stricter gun controls—another says that law-abiding citizens need easier access to guns for their own protection. One says that most of our country’s international trade agreements should be stopped because they have taken jobs away from Americans—another says these agreements are necessary and vital to the global economy in which we live.

Another obviously unique quality to this year’s election is the candidates themselves. Hillary Clinton is the first woman to be nominated from her party for president of the United States. Donald Trump, on the other hand, is a businessman and real estate mogul, who has no political experience. He also has a habit of speaking in very scathing and sarcastic language to any who disagree with him, regardless of their party affiliation. As a result, although he is running as a Republican, he has not been endorsed by some of the most politically powerful individuals in that party.

NEGATIVITY ABOUNDS

Perhaps the most telling commentary on the unique character of this year’s election is that the “negative” ratings of both candidates are historically high. In one recent poll, a majority ranging from 51% to 60% expressed a lack of confidence in both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump on the critical issues of the United States’ economy, immigration, and terrorism. Many also expressed the opinion that foreign leaders have either little respect for, or a negative view towards, the two candidates.

To the sincere Bible student, neither the Democratic nor Republican candidate in this year's presidential election seems to be guided by God's principles of righteousness and justice as set forth in the Scriptures. The qualities cited in our opening text—compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, forgiveness, and love—which Paul says are required of “God's elect”—are sorely lacking in today's political environment.

Furthermore, Jesus' words that “the poor in spirit,” “the meek,” “the merciful,” “the pure in heart,” and “the peacemakers,” are considered “blessed” in God's sight is unfathomable in the context of modern politics. (Matt. 5:3-9) Even if this were not so, human wisdom of potential leaders is quite incapable of removing selfishness from the hearts of those over whom they might rule. Indeed, the electorate themselves are marred by the same lack of godlike principles as the candidates running for office. This is why even where there is a semblance of a plan for human betterment, it is almost inevitably marked by failure.

GOD HAS A PLAN

God has a plan, however, which includes the necessary wisdom and power to implement it. When his due time arrives to put it into operation for the world of mankind, the problems of the sin-cursed and dying human race will be solved, not according to man's fallen ability, but by the divine power of the Almighty Creator. Jesus will be God's chief representative in the execution of his plan, and concerning him the Scriptures state: “There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a

Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit [power] of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.”—Isa. 11:1-4

The expression, “he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked,” is simply a symbolic manner of stating the fact that this divine ruler’s word and authority will have to be obeyed by all those who want to continue living—the “rod of his mouth” and the “breath of his lips” symbolizing his authoritative commands. This authority and the power to enforce it will be very essential parts of a rulership which will actually succeed. Simply to argue for the poor and to render righteous judgment among the people would not be enough to accomplish the work designed by the Creator for his representative to accomplish.

GOD’S ELECTION

Interestingly enough, Christ Jesus, the chief executor in God’s great plan for the solving of human problems, is an elected official, but his election was not by man, nor by the preferences of men. He was elected, or chosen, by his Heavenly Father, the Creator. Concerning this, God said,

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.”—Isa. 42:1-4

Jesus will not be the only “elect” ruler in that wonderful future government, although he will be the chief leader—“the government shall be upon his shoulder.” (Isa. 9:6) He will have associates, whom the Bible calls “kings and priests” who will reign with Christ. (Rev. 5:10; 20:4,6) The Scriptures also speak of these as being “joint-heirs” with Jesus. (Rom. 8:17) The Prophet Isaiah speaks of that future governmental arrangement as “Zion.” We quote: “Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.”—Isa. 28:16,17

In Revelation 14:1 we have a symbolic illustration of Jesus and his kingdom associates together on “mount Sion.” Jesus is here pictured as a “Lamb,” because he gave himself in sacrifice for the sins of the world. The text reads, “I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads.”

Concerning those who are with the Lamb on “mount Sion,” verse 4 reads, “These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.” One of the interesting points here mentioned is that those who are with the Lamb on “mount Sion,” are there because they follow him “whithersoever he goeth.” This means that in following him, they became like him.

ELECTION FOREKNOWN BY GOD

We have another reference concerning this same class, that they are “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” (I Pet. 1:2) Here we have a definite statement that those associated with Jesus as his joint-heirs are elected, or chosen, to this position by God the Father. Peter explains that this is according to the operation of God’s foreknowledge. Paul also speaks of this foreknowledge, saying, “Whom he [God] did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.”—Rom. 8:29

God’s foreknowledge or predestination spoken of by Peter and Paul in the foregoing Scriptures is not to be thought of as applying to the individuals themselves, but rather to the terms of their election. They must be “conformed to the image of his Son.” Only those who seek to meet this predetermined qualification will have part in the election of God, and if faithful, attain the exalted position of living and reigning with Christ. It is, in fact, God who “draws” these to himself, and extends to them the invitation to run for this high position. They are not self-declared candidates for rulership in the

Messianic kingdom, but are “partakers of the heavenly calling.”—John 6:44; Heb. 3:1

The “calling” of God is not enough, nor sufficient, to win his election. Peter wrote, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (II Pet. 1:10,11) “These things” which Peter says we must do to make our “election sure” are the development of the various graces of character described in the previous verses—“moral excellence, knowledge, . . . self-control, perseverance, . . . godliness, brotherly kindness, . . . and love.”—vss. 5-7, *New American Standard Bible*

It is clear from this that we do not make our “election sure” by seeking the votes, or approval, of the people. Through faithfulness to the will of God, and seeking his approval, however, we may, by his grace, hear his words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many.” (Matt. 25:21) Each one who lives and reigns with Christ will do so only because he has made his “calling and election sure.” In Revelation 17:14, this class is again pictured with the Lamb, and the statement concerning them is that they are “called, and chosen, and faithful.”

DAYS SHORTENED “THROUGH” ELECT

The divinely elected rulers of God’s coming kingdom are referred to in our Lord’s great prophecy. Here Jesus speaks concerning a time of “great

tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” (Matt. 24:21) This is a quote, in part, from the Prophet Daniel, who spoke of a great “time of trouble” resulting from the standing up of “Michael.”—Dan. 12:1

The name Michael means one “who is like God.” That is, he is one who God uses to speak and act on his behalf, to carry out his purposes. Jesus is that one. What Daniel refers to as a “time of trouble” Jesus describes as a time of “great tribulation.” Daniel’s prophecy declares that it would be a time of trouble “such as never was since there was a nation,” and to this Jesus adds, “no, nor ever shall be” again. Thus, Jesus locates the fulfillment of this prophecy as being just prior to the establishment of his glorious Messianic kingdom, which will make an end of all trouble.

Jesus also explains how severe that trouble will be, saying, “Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved.” (Matt. 24:22) This is familiar language today, when the total destruction of the human race is threatened, whether by nuclear weapons, environmental pollution, or other catastrophic events. There seems to be little doubt that Jesus is referring to the very time in which we are living.

Thankfully, Jesus does not leave us with a hopeless picture of this situation. Having said that unless these days of tribulation should be shortened, all flesh would be destroyed, he continues in the same verse by saying, “But for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.” The phrase “for the elect’s sake” as found in the *King James Version* is better translated “through the elect,” as suggested

by both *Strong's Greek Dictionary* and *Thayer's Greek Definitions*. Thus, the entire phrase would be better rendered, "Through the elect those days shall be shortened."

GOD'S ELECTION—NOT MAN'S

We are glad that God will not depend upon the votes of the people to elect his rulers of the world to come. How thankful we are that he who reads the hearts, and is able to give strength and ability even to the weak, is making his own selection. Finally, when all those whom he has called and chosen have made their calling and election sure through faithfulness to God and to his eternal principles of righteousness, the long-promised kingdom of peace and happiness will come to mankind.

There is much trepidation and uncertainty as we approach this year's presidential election, and little cause for anticipation of positive change in the world, regardless of who is elected in November. How different that will be, however, when God's kingdom is established in the earth, and fulfills the prayer uttered by countless millions for the past two thousand years, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."—Matt. 6:10 ■

*"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom
and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his
judgments, and his ways past finding out!
For who hath known the mind of the Lord? . . .
For of him, and through him, and to him, are all
things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."
—Romans 11:33-36*