

God's Hand in the Affairs of Men

“Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.”
—Revelation 15:3,4

IN A WORLD ENGULFED BY

trouble and uncertainty many inquire as to whether or not God is really interested in the affairs of men and in their ultimate future. To many it seems that the forces of evil have been too successful, and that the future holds only trouble and disaster. The faith of many has been shaken, both in the Bible and in God, its author.

However, a close examination of the Bible discloses that God has a definite plan

for the human race, and that much of it is revealed to those who have committed their ways to the Lord. In Ephesians 1:9-11 we read: “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of

times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

God’s plan, or purpose, is unchangeable, for we read: “The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.” (Isa. 14:24) Again, God says through the prophet: “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”—Isa. 55:11

What, then, has God been doing since his great creative acts recorded in the book of Genesis? Some would have us believe that he has been trying to convert the world, and that this is the chief mission of Christianity. Let us remember, however, that God never “tries” to do things. Everything is subject to his will, and nothing can interfere with the accomplishment of his plans.

The Bible informs us that for a period of time, which we speak of as the age of the Patriarchs, God placed his favor upon certain individuals and dealt with them in his own peculiar manner. Among these were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God dealt with them by means of a covenant—that through the “seed,” or offspring, of Abraham, all the families of the earth were to be blessed.—Gen. 12:3; 22:16-18

Various nations have employed covenants of law and order to bless their subjects. There was the Magna Carta of England, issued in A.D. 1215, under

King John. In the United States, in 1776, there came the Declaration of Independence, followed by the Constitution and Bill of Rights—the first ten amendments to the Constitution. These have generally been a blessing in that they have served to maintain, at least in some measure, law and order as well as preserve the privileges of liberty and freedom.

In 1945 a good part of the world subscribed to the Charter of the United Nations. At the time, this was referred to by some as “the world’s last hope for peace.” Now, after nearly eight decades of faltering efforts, many doubt if the United Nations has much influence in bringing peace to the earth—that genuine and lasting peace which people so eagerly and sincerely desire.

Across from the United Nations building in New York City, there is inscribed on a stone wall that wonderful prophecy of Micah, “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.” (Mic. 4:3) This is what nearly all nations desire, but it cannot become a reality by the efforts of fallen human beings. It can be brought about only by the one who has been given the title, “The Prince of Peace.”—Isa. 9:6

The Prince of Peace will establish true and lasting peace in fulfillment of that outstanding declaration made to Abraham by God, when he said to him, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy

name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”—Gen. 12:1-3

After Abraham proved his faith by his willingness to follow God’s instructions and offer his only son Isaac in sacrifice, Jehovah spoke to him again, saying, “Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”—Gen. 22:2,16-18

Abraham died without this promise being fulfilled. However, it was confirmed to his “seed”—his son Isaac—to whom God said: “Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father; And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; Because that Abraham obeyed my voice.”—Gen. 26:3-5

Isaac also died, and still the promise was unfulfilled. However, God again confirmed the promise to his son, Jacob, saying, “Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”—Gen. 28:14

The promise was likewise not fulfilled in Jacob's day. Following his death, God began to deal with his twelve sons, who became the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, Jacob's name having been changed to Israel. (Gen. 32:28) Now the Lord's hand was shown in his dealings with a nation—the nation of Israel. Jehovah said to Israel as a nation, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth."—Amos 3:2

God's special favor over Israel lasted more than eighteen centuries. Through Moses he gave them his Law and established his covenant. He sent his prophets to this people to counsel them, and to reprimand them when they were unfaithful to their covenant. When faithful to him, God blessed the Israelites in basket and in store, and gave them victory over their enemies. (Deut. 28:1-9) Under the terms of the Law Covenant the people of Israel were also blessed with an opportunity to gain life. However, this called for full obedience to the Law, which, as members of a sin-cursed and dying race, was beyond their ability.

GOD SENT HIS SON

Near the close of Israel's special period of favor, God's hand was manifest in the greatest event known to man. He sent his beloved Son to redeem mankind from the curse of sin and death. The Prophet Isaiah wrote, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." (Isa. 9:2) Jesus was that "true Light" which eventually will enlighten "every man that cometh into the world."—John 1:9

Jesus confined his message to the nation of Israel. Thus the Israelites were the first to receive the invitation to become his disciples. Jesus said to his apostles, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."—Matt. 10:5-7

Only a small minority of the Israelites accepted Jesus, and after his resurrection he instructed his disciples to be his witnesses throughout all the earth. (Acts 1:8) The purpose of this world-wide witness, however, has not been to convert everyone to be followers in Jesus' footsteps, but, as stated by James, God desired to take out from the world "a people for his name" to be associated with Jesus in his future work of blessing mankind.—Acts 15:14

The "way" in which these are invited to walk is not an easy one. Jesus said that those who would be his disciples would have to deny themselves, and take up their cross and follow him. (Matt. 16:24) This means suffering and dying with Jesus. Not many in the ensuing two thousand years since Jesus' earthly ministry have been willing to pursue this course of self-denial and suffering. Hence, Jesus refers to these as a "little flock" to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom.—Luke 12:32

A HIGH REWARD

To the rich young ruler Jesus said that if he would give up all and follow him he would have "treasure in heaven." (Matt. 19:21; Luke 18:18,22) One of these treasures will be the divine nature.

(II Pet. 1:4) Those who are faithful will receive “glory and honour and immortality.” (Rom. 2:7) They are also to reign with Christ—Rev. 20:4

The Apostle Paul informs us that Jesus and his true followers of the present age, Christ’s “body” members, are in reality the “seed” God promised to Abraham, the seed that was to bless all the families of the earth. (Gal. 3:8,16,27-29) The purpose of the thousand-year reign of Christ is to bestow God’s promised blessings of life upon the people of all nations who then accept the provision of life made for them through the sacrificial death of Jesus, and who obey the laws of his kingdom.

God’s hand in human affairs throughout the present age has been operating in the selection of this true church of Christ. This work has gone on unknown to the world in general, but gloriously blessed by the Lord. With this work completed, God’s hand will be manifested to the whole world through the agencies of Christ’s kingdom.

The word church—*ekklesia* in the Greek language—means a called out assembly. After this class has been called out from the world, all others will be given an opportunity to hear and obey. James said that then the “residue of men,” and “all the Gentiles” will have an opportunity to “seek after the Lord.” He also explains that “known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”—Acts 15:14-18

A NEW DAY

We believe that God’s work of selecting from the world this people to be associate rulers in Christ’s kingdom is nearly complete, which means that the

time for the world's enlightenment and deliverance is near. We are today living in the most important period of the world's history. Little do the people realize as yet that God's hand is being manifested in present world events, even as foretold in the prophecies of the Bible. Darkness still covers the earth, but soon the people will see the dawn of a new day—a day that will be born, as it were, in clouds of trouble.

This new day dawns as a result of the Second Advent of Jesus. The clear testimony of the Bible is that Jesus returns as a glorious divine being, invisible to human eyes, but with all power to direct the affairs of men in keeping with the divine arrangement. Jesus said to his disciples, "Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live."—John 14:19, *English Standard Version*

Jesus' true and faithful followers will be able to see him, because, in the resurrection, they are exalted to the same divine nature which he possesses. John wrote, "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is," not as he was, "in the days of his flesh."—I John 3:1-3; Heb. 5:7

During Jesus' earthly ministry nearly twenty centuries ago, his disciples asked him what the signs of his second coming, or presence [Greek: *parousia*], would be. He said that there would then be "upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall

they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”—Luke 21:25-27

Much of this is symbolic language. The world will “see” Jesus in a “cloud.” A similar thought is expressed in Revelation 1:7. A literal cloud conceals. Here, however, clouds are used to symbolize the trouble and distress described by Jesus. This “tribulation” will eventually help the unbelieving world to “see,” or discern, the hand of God in the affairs of men through the crumbling of their own sinful social order, or world.—Matt. 24:21,22

This is the world over which Satan is “god” and “prince.” (II Cor. 4:4; John 16:11) It is an “evil world.” (Gal. 1:4) It is the destruction of this world that is foretold in the Bible, not the burning up of the literal planet Earth. (I John 2:15-17; Eccles. 1:4) We can rejoice that this present evil world is coming to an end.

Jesus said that the tribulation which was to come upon Satan’s world at the end of the age would be so great that unless the period of distress was shortened all flesh would be destroyed. However, he assured us that this great “time of trouble” would be shortened by Jesus and his true followers, the “elect,” exercising their divine power to intervene in human affairs through the establishment of the Messianic kingdom.—Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:22

Another manifestation of God’s hand in the affairs of men is foretold by the Prophet Daniel. In a reference to the rulers of the earth at the ending portion of the present Christian age, Daniel’s prophecy states, “In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall

never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”—Dan. 2:44

Zephaniah 3:8,9, reads, “Wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth [symbolic] shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then I will turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.”

This is powerful language. It plainly indicates God’s hand in the affairs of men, bringing an end to the world’s current social order, and establishing a new order in which all people will serve the Lord “with one consent.” We rejoice that the complete fulfillment of the prophecy is so near; that soon, through Christ and his resurrected true church, God will turn a pure message of truth to the people, causing the knowledge of his glory to fill the earth, “as the waters cover the sea.”—Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14

Centuries before Jesus came to Earth at his First Advent, the Prophet Isaiah foretold: “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 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 for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”—Isa. 9:6,7

This prophecy began to be fulfilled with the birth of Jesus, but its preview of the Messianic kingdom in the hands of Jesus has not yet been realized. However, we are now living in “the day of his preparation” for the coming glorious age of peace and righteousness. (Nah. 2:3,4) We know that when the new world government is firmly established on the “shoulder” of The Prince of Peace, all the present perplexing problems of mankind will be solved. Then, after so many long centuries, the nations will not learn war any more.

The distressing problem of sickness and death will then be solved also, for Jesus will be the world’s “everlasting Father”—that is, the one who will give everlasting life. Paul wrote that Christ will reign until all enemies are put under his feet, and that the last enemy to be destroyed is death. (I Cor. 15:25,26) It is difficult to imagine a world in which there will be no sickness, no pain, no tears, no death. However, Jesus’ death as the Redeemer of mankind from sin and death, provided for just such blessings, and they will be available to the people through the agencies of his kingdom.—Isa. 25:6-9; 33:24; Rev. 21:2-5

The Apostle Peter explained that during the Messianic kingdom there will be “times of restitution of all things,” and added that this glorious time of blessing had been foretold by the mouth of all God’s holy prophets since the world began. (Acts 3:20,21) Restitution means restoration, and among the things to be restored to mankind are health and life.

This will include all those who have previously died and “sleep” in their graves. (John 11:11-14; I Thess. 4:13,14) The Bible uses the phrase “a ransom for all” to describe Jesus’ work of redemption, and Isaiah wrote that “the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” —I Tim. 2:3-6; Isa. 35:10

Then all will know the true God, “from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD.” —Jer. 31:34 ■