

Waiting for the Kingdom

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, ... And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
—*Philippians 2:9-11*

have rejoiced in these promises.

THROUGHOUT THE SACRED Scriptures, the subject of the kingdom of God is a very prominent one. In Jesus’ model prayer it is represented as the agency which will be employed for the reestablishment of the divine will upon the earth. (Matt. 6:10) Throughout man’s long experience with sin and death, God has made many promises concerning the blessings of the kingdom which he proposes to establish upon the earth. Many of those whose hearts have been in harmony with God and with righteousness

Some, however, have not been willing to await God’s time for the establishment of his kingdom, but have undertaken abortive efforts of their own to set it up. Yet, the failure of these human efforts will in

no sense discourage those who have faith in the promises of God that in his own time and way all of the glorious promises which he has made in respect to the future blessing of mankind will be fulfilled.

God's laws, which are just, holy and good, must be upheld in order for his blessings to be available for his creatures. It was because of disobedience to divine law that the penalty of death came upon the human race. Satan used his influence in connection with the disobedience of our first parents. He succeeded in tempting them to transgress God's law, and has used his advantage with rare ability and great persistence in dragging mankind into every imaginable kind of physical, mental and moral sickness. The depth of man's calamities, however, are not of such a sort that infinite wisdom, goodness and power cannot provide the means by which God can receive him again into his favor, one more blessed and precious because of his former experience with sin.

A plan of operation was instituted by God to "seek and to save that which was lost," and to deliver the groaning creation from the "bondage of corruption," sin and death. (Luke 19:10; Rom. 8:19-22) As illustrated in the parable of the lost sheep, a loving shepherd, the only begotten Son of God, was sent to recover the lost sheep. He left the ninety and nine in their accustomed pastures, representing the many orders of angelic creation which remained in harmony with God. (Eph. 3:10; Col. 1:16) Laying aside his heavenly glory, he humbled himself, and became a man—Christ Jesus.—Luke 15:4-7; Phil. 2:7

What wonderful patience was manifested by Jesus, the good shepherd, in seeking and saving fallen man! He was not discouraged by the risk and privation

associated with his work of bringing salvation to mankind—the lost sheep. He steadfastly resisted the temptations of the adversary and endured the contradiction of sinners. When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion, for they were like sheep having no shepherd. He came to minister, and went about preaching the glad tidings, healing the sick, and even raising the dead.—Matt. 4:3-11; 9:18-25,35,36; 20:28

While often faint and weary, Jesus did not give up the mission for which he came to earth. He was faithful even unto death, and as Paul states, we now look to “Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, ... For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself.”—Heb. 12:2,3

Jesus endured it all, for, in the language of the parable, he went after that which was lost, and when he found it, he “layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.” (Luke 15:5) None of the ransomed can fully know the depth of the waters crossed, nor how dark was the night through which the Lord passed, ere he found the lost sheep. What beauty we see in this picture! The shepherd did not chide the wandering sheep, nor seek to drive it back with increased fears, but took it in his arms and bore it back to its proper home and blessings. Man was guilty, and Jesus came to help him in his weakness. He did not come as a wrathful avenger, but as a sympathizing friend.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD’S COMPASSION

Jesus’ compassion for the multitudes brought criticisms from the lofty, the self-righteous, and the hard-hearted, yet he continued to be sympathetic

and kind. Through Jesus we are able to understand some of the depths of divine compassion, and of why it is true as stated in the parable, that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents.—Luke 15:7

Of the Almighty himself, the prophet wrote, “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.”—Mic. 7:18,19

How wonderfully merciful and sympathetic the Creator has been, and what depth of love is manifested in sending his Son to recover the sinful and lost race! While God’s justice could not clear the guilty, yet his loving sympathy for the condemned race has caused him to suffer long in order that salvation might be the grand result. (II Pet. 3:15) Sin is more awful to God than to us. Our senses are dulled, and we suffer for only a few years, but he has been long-suffering with sin and its effects among mankind for thousands of years. However, God’s plan to shower blessings through all eternity upon his human creation will, in the end, be of far greater joy to him than the comparatively short time of witnessing man’s struggle with sin and its effects. Indeed, it is this very experience with sin which God knows will be of eternal value to his human creation.

Consider the heights of divine fortitude, the infinite strength, the firmness of mind that has enabled God to endure that which his wisdom and foreknowledge have dictated in this great lesson of the permission of evil. Consider how he has permitted

his name to be reviled, reproached and misrepresented to the utmost limit, and his glory as the incorruptible God changed to the image of man, birds, beasts and creeping things. (Rom. 1:23) Consider him as he beheld the course of his beloved Son from Bethlehem to Calvary, suffering for sins, “the just for the unjust.”—I Pet. 3:18

If God has recorded for our admonition his manifestations of long-suffering toward sin and its terrible results, he has likewise detailed in no uncertain terms the showers of blessings he will dispense when his kingdom is established, under the rulership of Christ. Paul writes that if God “spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32) Time would fail to recount all of the abundant testimonies given us in the Scriptures concerning God’s purpose to bless mankind. These are positive, glorious and thrilling earthly promises of blessings yet in store for the repentant and restored race. In them we are told of the triumphant joy and pleasure the great author of redemption will have in the dispensing of these blessings in his kingdom. Note a few of these reassuring promises:

“I create new heavens and a new earth.”—Isa. 65:17; II Pet. 3:13

“I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.”—Isa. 65:18

“Before they call, I will answer.”—Isa. 65:24

“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.”—Isa. 65:25

“Many nations shall come, and say, ... let us go up to the mountain of the LORD.”—Mic. 4:2

“All nations shall flow unto it.”—Isa. 2:2

“All flesh [shall] come to worship before me.”—Isa. 66:23; Rev. 15:4

“I will make the place of my feet glorious.” “The earth is my footstool.”—Isa. 60:13; 66:1

“Behold, I make all things new. ... These words are true and faithful.”—Rev. 21:5

Billions have perished in death, whether on battlefields, by disease, calamities, plagues, murder, poverty, or by other means. All these in due time will be awakened under “new heavens” and in a “new earth,” where the knowledge of the Lord will be worldwide. (Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14) When it dawns upon their minds as to why they have been called forth from the tomb and have been given the privileges associated with that new kingdom rule, and that these wonderful blessings of God have been purchased for them through the redemptive sacrifice of Christ, we cannot be surprised that they will lift up their heads and say, “Other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.” Mankind will become so enthralled and captivated with their new surroundings that “the former [things] shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.”—Isa. 26:13; 65:17

KINGDOM ESTABLISHED BY DIVINE POWER

All true Christians should be on the alert, watching for evidences that God’s kingdom is near. However, they should always keep in mind the great fundamental truth of the Bible which makes it clear that divine power, and not human effort, is to establish that kingdom.

We should ever remember that the church in the flesh is a suffering and sacrificing church, not a

reigning one. It is the privilege of the Christian to bear witness to whatever God may be accomplishing, and to tell of the glorious kingdom which he will establish. In this present time of trouble when the nations of earth are being shaken in preparation for the kingdom, it is also the Christian's privilege to bear witness to this fact, and to the "silver lining" just beyond the current storm clouds. Aside from this, the work of the espoused "bride" of Christ now is to make "herself ready," and to await the consummation of her hope by being "faithful unto death," that she might receive the "crown of life," and exaltation to "glory and honour and immortality." —Rev. 19:7; 2:10; Rom. 2:7

MISAPPLICATION OF PROMISES

Long before Jesus' earthly ministry, God made this promise to his Son: "I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." (Ps. 2:8, *Revised Version*) Without doubt the Master knew that this and other similar promises applied to him. Nevertheless, he did not make the mistake of misapplying them and expecting that they were to be fulfilled during the time he dwelt upon the earth.

Moreover, when Jesus did ask of his Father things pertaining to his followers, his petition was a very restricted one. Instead of asking for all the nations as an inheritance, he said, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." (John 17:9) Jesus recognized that the time had not then come for him to ask his Father for the rulership of the whole earth. He knew, furthermore, that the due time for this request would not

come until his own sacrificial work, as well as the sacrificial work of his “body” members, his “bride,” was completed.

The Apostle Paul tells us that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” In this same passage, he also makes it clear that those who do become associates with Jesus in his Messianic kingdom must undergo a change of nature. “This mortal must put on immortality,” he says. (I Cor. 15:50,53) To overlook these clear statements of the Bible can lead to all sorts of confusing and erroneous conclusions. Christians should be on the alert that they not be drawn into what might appear attractive looking, but actually “pseudo” kingdom arrangements which are not authorized by the Scriptures.

On this point, a faithful Christian once said: “Temptations continually assail the Lord’s people—suggestions to do some wonderful works in his name and to prove to themselves and to others that they are heaven’s favorites. The lesson for us to learn is, that the work which the Father has given us to do is not a work of convincing the world, but rather that we should quietly, yet as effectively as reason and propriety will permit, let our light shine and to simply manifest a desire to occupy the reasonable position of servants, ministers of the Truth.”

THE DIVINE COMMISSION

Jesus prophesied that before the end of this present time of great trouble, and hence before his Messianic kingdom on earth, the “gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations.” (Matt. 24:14) This has been the divine

commission given to Christ's footstep followers throughout the present Gospel Age, and it is no less now the Christian's commission. Indeed, it is a most appropriate time to proclaim more zealously than ever the glad tidings of great joy concerning the blessings coming to mankind just beyond this time of trouble. Thus, to give a message of hope and comfort in the midst of a dark and distressed world is a wonderful privilege.

The fact that some in the past have mistakenly supposed that the kingdom of God was established in their day should not lead us to take the position that even now its establishment is in the remote, far-off future. We should not be blind to the fact that in our very day the kingdoms of the world are being shaken to the core, and will soon be supplanted by a "kingdom which cannot be moved," by which the "desire of all nations shall come."—Heb. 12:26-28; Hag. 2:6,7

We can rejoice to be living in this most wondrous time of earth's history. We can lift up our heads with confidence as we note the stately steppings of our God, and realize that the work of shaking which has been foretold is even now taking place in the earth. Although the period required to displace the old order has already stretched out over many years, it is only a short period as God reckons time. Compared to his "everlasting kingdom," earth's present time of trouble will be short indeed.—Ps. 145:10-13

Meanwhile, let those of us who are privileged to be living in this period, when the old order is passing away in order to make place for the new, rejoice more than ever before in the opportunity that is ours of proclaiming the glad tidings of the kingdom

and of thus being witnesses for God and for his glorious arrangements. We are not to do this, however, in a condemnatory spirit. Let us, rather, realize that if some, even a majority, fail to appreciate the message of the kingdom now, the Lord will cause them to understand in that future glorious new day when all the blind eyes will be opened and all the deaf ears will be unstopped.—Isa. 35:5

The divine commission given in God's Word to the followers of Christ of giving witness to the "gospel of the kingdom" should be deemed a grand privilege. It is our joy to believe in the kingdom, to wait for the kingdom, to pray for the kingdom, and to bear witness to the kingdom. However, it is God's work to establish his kingdom. He will accomplish this, not through any earthly arrangements, but through Christ Jesus our Lord, now the "express image" of the Father's person, and who is at "the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Heb. 1:3) Let us each rejoice at the blessed prospect which lays before mankind! ■