

# Assurance for All People

*“The work of  
righteousness shall  
be peace; and the  
effect of  
righteousness  
quietness and  
assurance for ever.  
And my people  
shall dwell in a  
peaceable  
habitation, and in  
sure dwellings, and  
in quiet resting  
places.”*

—Isaiah 32:17,18

## **MANY WOULD BE INCLINED**

to conclude that there is very little assurance among mankind of a positive outcome to the myriad problems which plague today's world. In fact, the only assurances that seem to be clear in the minds of the people are along two lines. First, there is the assurance among most that the world's troubles will only continue to worsen. Second, all are assured that their individual lifetime

is limited, and sooner or later, they will die.

We do not deny the reality of the world's worsening conditions, whether they be along the lines of political, social, moral or other aspects of mankind's existence. We also concur that, under the present order of things, death will continue its awful work among earth's billions. If, though, such things constitute our only assurances relative to man's future, there is little

to look forward to with hopeful anticipation. The consistent testimony of the Bible, however, presents a much different outlook for the future of the earth, and man's existence on it.

Our opening text is one such passage of Scripture, in which is promised conditions of righteousness, peace and quietness among people. In addition, it speaks of the "assurance" that these conditions will come to pass. Certainly, to the extent that we claim such promises, and have confidence that they will come to fruition, our outlook for the future of mankind should be much brighter. We should be able to look beyond the present troubles, and be assured as the Psalmist David was, that God's "anger" concerning mankind's present downward course "endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."—Ps. 30:5

## **ASSURANCE RELATED TO FAITH**

The word "assurance" as used in our opening text denotes confidence, security and trust. Assurance, particularly with respect to God's promises for mankind's future blessing, requires faith. This requirement is noted by the Apostle Paul when he defines faith as relating to "things hoped for" and "things not seen." (Heb. 11:1) The promises which Isaiah, David, and the other prophets recorded were of this kind. They were things hoped for and not yet seen—that is, they were promises for the future. By faith, these Old Testament servants of God claimed them, and were assured of their eventual fulfillment. Indeed, Paul says, "these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them."—Heb. 11:13

The faith, and resulting assurance, of those such as Isaiah, David, and others was not based on blind belief, which is credulity. This is also noted by Paul in his definition of faith. Faith can only exist, Paul says, if the things hoped for are based on “substance” and the things not seen are founded on “evidence.” The substance and evidence which were the basis of faith to these faithful ones of old were primarily along two lines. The substance was that which they understood of God’s eternal plans and purposes for mankind. The evidence was the daily guidance and direction which they individually recognized as coming from God in the course of their daily lives.

A prime example of both aspects of faith is found in Abraham. When God asked him to sacrifice his son Isaac, something nearly unthinkable to do from the human standpoint, Abraham did not hesitate. This was because the “substance” of the resurrection hope was firmly established in his mind, so much that Paul said Abraham accounted that God was able to raise Isaac up, “even from the dead.” The “evidence” aspect of Abraham’s faith was shown immediately thereafter, for when he raised his hand to slay his son, an angel of the Lord intervened and miraculously prevented certain death from coming to Isaac. Hence, Paul further says that Abraham received his beloved son back “from the dead ... in a figure.”—Heb. 11:19

Although few have been asked to display their faith to the same degree as Abraham, the same principles apply as to its development. Even today, true faith must be based on the substance of God’s plan and its foundation doctrines, and upon the daily evidences of his providential care and overruling in

the lives of his people. Such faith must develop in us a realization that even adversities which God may permit to come upon us will work in us “patience, experience, ... hope,” and the “peaceable fruit of righteousness,” if we are rightly “exercised thereby.” (Rom. 5:3-5; Heb. 12:6-11) Thus, the promises of God “hoped for” but “not seen” in their completed state are very real and can be claimed in “full assurance of faith.”—Heb. 10:22

### **GUIDED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT**

In addition to the great faith displayed by the heroes of old, and as shown in their writings, their record was also guided by God’s Holy Spirit—his power and influence. The Apostle Peter points out this important fact. He states that we have a “sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”—II Pet. 1:19-21

For those today who are striving to do God’s will in their lives, the Holy Spirit is likewise required for their ultimate success in realizing “full assurance of faith” in all of God’s promises. It is through the help and influence of his Spirit by which his people grow in the understanding of God’s plan, and through which they also develop, day by day, into the image of the Heavenly Father’s character attributes—summed up in love.—John 16:13; I John 4:16

## LIMITED FAITH—LIMITED ASSURANCE

Most in the professed Christian world would no doubt claim that they have faith and assurance. However, in the majority of cases, it is of a very limited scope. The assurance of God's promises is largely thought of as applying to only a relatively small percentage of the vast billions of mankind who have ever lived. For the rest, their fate is concluded to be eternal destruction of one kind or another. The same holds true with the general outlook for the earth itself, with many holding to the belief that the literal earth is doomed to be destroyed.

Such limited faith in the full testimony of God's Word, of necessity, will result in limited assurance of his promises. If we believe that the God of the universe is unable, or unloving, so as to not provide a full opportunity by which his human creation might be recovered back to harmony with him, our assurance of his noble designs is sorely limited. If, too, we suppose that he will destroy the earth, the beautiful home he created for man, how can we conclude anything except that it was all done in vain. Here again, the "sure word of prophecy" provides assurance, but only to those with sufficient faith. "Thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD." "The earth abideth for ever."—Isa. 45:18; Eccles. 1:4

## SIN AND DEATH

To more fully understand and gain assurance concerning God's promises found in the Scriptures, it is necessary that we examine some of the details, the

substance, of his eternal plans and purposes. These also are to be found in his Word. Thus, if the Bible is to mean to us what it should, we must accept it in its entirety as the inspired Word of God. Early in its pages we are informed that our first parents were created in the image of God. This means that they were perfect and endowed with the divine qualities of love, sympathy, and understanding. Surely, if the earth today were filled with such people, there would be none of the ugly evils which presently afflict mankind.—Gen. 1:27,28

These perfect specimens of humanity were instructed to obey God's law and were informed that disobedience would lead to death. (Gen. 2:17) They disobeyed, and the death sentence fell upon them. Soon, more trouble began. Cain murdered his brother Abel, and murder still continues. The downward course of the human race has been constant. The record reveals that less than two thousand years after the fall of man "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."—Gen. 6:5

The Flood destroyed that evil social order, but shortly afterward sin and selfishness again began to increase, and every generation since has experienced its terrible results. There have been wars and a host of other distressing manifestations of the fact that the human race is indeed fallen and incapable of rescuing itself from the downward pull of sin. The Bible attests to this, as do the pages of secular history.—Rom. 3:9-19,23

## **RELIEF PROMISED**

In every generation, however, there were a few who endeavored to maintain their belief in God, and

who tried to stem the tide of human selfishness. Abraham was one of these, as discussed in the foregoing pages. God made a wonderful promise to Abraham, assuring him that through his “seed,” or progeny, all the families of the earth would be blessed. When Abraham demonstrated his complete faith in God by his willingness to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering, God confirmed the promise by his oath.—Gen. 12:3; 22:15-18

This promise was passed on to Isaac and later to Jacob, the grandson of Abraham. (Gen. 26:4; 28:14) When Jacob died, it became the heritage of the nation of Israel as a whole. To the devout of Israel this promise to Abraham was the basis of their hope in a coming Messiah. As they understood it, the Messiah would establish a powerful government in Israel, one which would reach out and bless all the families, or nations, of the earth.

The greatest event ever to take place in the earth up to that time was the birth of Jesus, who had been sent into the world to fulfill the Messianic promises. However, the birth of Jesus received little publicity at the time. The shepherds, to whom the announcement of Jesus’ birth was made by the angels, no doubt did what they could to spread the news, but this was scant publication of an event so important to mankind. The wise men who came later were greatly impressed, and they probably spread the news to some extent. Perhaps the greatest notice the birth of Jesus received was in connection with Herod’s attempt to destroy the child by the slaughter of all the Hebrew children in that area. Thus, as today, the good was temporarily overshadowed by the evil.

Regardless of the amount of attention given to the birth of Jesus at the time, one of the greatest events in history had occurred. It was a ray of light in the nighttime of human experience, for the one whom the Creator had promised to redeem mankind from the forces of sin and death was born. To be sure, he was born in a lowly manger, but his birth was announced by God's holy angels. He was born for the eventual role of being a Wonderful Counselor, a Mighty God, an Everlasting Father, and The Prince of Peace.—Isa. 9:6,7

## **MESSIAH AND KING**

Jesus was also born to be the great Messiah and King of promise. His disciples believed that this was his destiny, and indeed it was. They expected him to set up his kingdom immediately, first to deliver Israel from the Roman yoke of bondage, and then to take over the rulership of the world. However, while Jesus demonstrated by his miracles that he was capable of accomplishing great things, the disciples saw little or no evidence of a new government being formed under his leadership.

What they did see was increasing hostility toward Jesus by the religious rulers. The disciples did not understand Jesus' attitude in the face of the rising tide of opposition. He told them he intended to go to Jerusalem and expected to be arrested and put to death. They could not harmonize this with their expectations concerning their Master. Peter advised Jesus not to go to Jerusalem, and later he tried to prevent his arrest by the use of the sword.—Matt. 16:21-23; 20:18,19; John 18:10,11



However, this was all in vain. Jesus was determined to give himself up to his enemies, although he could have asked his Heavenly Father for the help of the holy angels had he believed it to be the divine will for him. (Matt. 26:53) Though their hearts were anguished, the disciples could do nothing to change this course of events. Their Messiah and King was betrayed and arrested. He was brought before priests and rulers to be tried, spat upon, beaten, to have a crown of thorns placed upon his brow, and to be nailed to a cross, where he was allowed to die.

## **THE REDEEMER**

It was by the sacrifice of his life that Jesus provided redemption from sin and death for all mankind. In addition to being the future King of the world, he was now the Redeemer of the human race. At that time, however, the disciples did not understand this, and they were bewildered by the fact that their Master had allowed his enemies to put him to death. Their great joy over his birth and miraculous ministry had been eclipsed by frustration, sadness and confusion occasioned by his death.

The faith of the disciples was so firmly established in the fact of his Messiahship that they paid little attention to certain of his statements indicating that he expected to die at the hands of his enemies. How could this happen to their Messiah? When he was crucified they recalled vaguely his promise that he would be raised from death on “the third day,” and they clung to this as their last hope.—Matt. 16:21; Luke 9:22

Early in the morning of that third day, certain women went to the tomb to complete the embalming

of Jesus' body, and they found it empty. An angel explained that their Master was not there, that he had risen. Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and instructed her to go and tell his disciples that he was no longer dead. (Luke 24:1-10; John 20:11-18) Later that day, Jesus appeared as a stranger to two of his disciples on the way to Emmaus, and upon his asking them the cause of their sadness, they explained what had happened and added, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done."—Luke 24:13-21

From the prophecies of the Old Testament, Jesus pointed out to these two disciples that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and die, and that the promises of his glory as Messiah and King would be fulfilled later. After Jesus disappeared from their sight these disciples said to each other, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"—vss. 26-32

Doubtless the hearts of all the disciples burned within them when they became convinced that their Master had been raised from the dead. However, few aside from Jesus' own dedicated followers believed that this great miracle had occurred. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was the most remarkable and wonderful event in world history, yet little attention was given to it. The good news concerning it as proclaimed by his faithful followers fell mostly upon deaf ears.

## **COMMEMORATION NOW**

On the last Friday in March, and the Sunday following, the death and resurrection of Jesus will

be commemorated by hundreds of millions. There will be much rejoicing, inspirational music, and even parades. Many churches will have their largest attendance of the year, and eloquent sermons will be preached. Yet the real meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus is still unknown by the majority of people. Indeed, many who preach on these days will themselves be in confusion as to these things, as will most in their congregations.

These two great events—Jesus’ death and resurrection—were critical to the success of God’s plan. Without the death of Jesus, mankind would continue to remain under condemnation to death, and therefore there could not be a new morning of joy for the human race. However, because Jesus gave his life a “ransom for all,” and thus made provision for the setting aside of the death sentence, the joyous morning promised will yet come true. (Ps. 30:5) The great fact of Jesus’ death as man’s Redeemer will be “testified in due time” to all people.—I Tim. 2:3-6

## **ASSURANCE THROUGH HIS RESURRECTION**

A dead Redeemer could not deliver mankind from death, nor could a dead King rule over and bless all the families of the earth, as God had promised Abraham. Hence, the next great step in the outworking of God’s plan for human salvation was the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The Heavenly Father demonstrated his power to fulfill his promises by raising Jesus from the dead. (Acts 2:32; I Cor. 15:3,4) This shows that nothing can successfully interfere with the accomplishment of God’s loving design for the uplift of the human race from the degradation caused by disobedience to his law.

Truly, then, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was a shining ray of hope for a distraught and dying world of mankind. In the present dark world of chaos and suffering, the people in general are without a true knowledge of God. He knows this. However, when his “judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” (Isa. 26:9) That day of judgment is still future. Concerning it, the Apostle Paul explains that God has “appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man [Christ Jesus] whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”—Acts 17:31

## **ASSURANCE ONLY THROUGH GOD’S PLAN**

There is no assurance of peace and quietness, spoken of in our opening text, to be found anywhere in the world today. Only when we look to God’s divine plan, as presented to us in his Word, do we have hope. In that plan Jesus is the Prince of Peace, the future teacher and righteous judge of the people, and the one who will enlighten all mankind. In him we see the great Messiah of promise, and the one who will be the new and righteous King of earth.

We have the assurance that the whole plan of the Creator, centered in Jesus, will have a glorious outcome in the earth, because the Father “gave his only begotten Son,” and raised him from the dead. (John 3:16) May our commemoration of Jesus’ death and resurrection in the coming weeks of this year inspire us all with a greater desire than ever before to tell the whole world the blessed tidings and assurance of the kingdom centered in him! ■