

A Sin-Sick and Dying World— God's Remedy for It

"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."
—Micah 4:1

TODAY WE DO NOT NEED

to belabor the point that the world is in a sin-sick and dying state. This present condition of mankind and earth's institutions manifests itself in essentially every aspect of its affairs—political, religious, economic, social, and moral, both nationally and worldwide. Because of this, the earth is filled with sin, suffering, and, of course, the greatest enemy of all, death. As we near the end of another year, there seems to be no way to remedy the blighting effects of what is taking place all about us, despite the

best efforts of many of the world's leaders to turn the situation around.

This is the time foretold by Jesus when he said that there would 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.” (Luke 21:25,26) As the world sees it, there is good reason to be perplexed and dismayed. The Greek word here translated perplexity literally means “no way out.” Indeed, mankind sees no way out of the present situation, no way out of the madness of human behavior in this time which Jesus described as one of “great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” (Matt. 24:21) In this statement Jesus is quoting substantially from the prophecy of Daniel, where the same period is described as “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.”—Dan. 12:1

To emphasize how dire this period of trouble would be, Jesus adds, “Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved.” He assures us, however, that these days would be shortened by divine power operating through himself and his church, “the elect.” (Matt. 24:22) In other words, Jesus agrees with the human viewpoint that there is no way out of the world's present trouble, but comforts us with the thought that God has provided a remedy, a way of salvation for the human race from its own evil course of sin and selfishness. It is this way out provided by God that we refer to in our title as his remedy for a sin-sick and dying world.

THE KINGDOM

In a word, God's remedy for the ills of fallen mankind is the kingdom, or government, which throughout his entire Word he has promised would be established. One of these promises concerns the coming of the great Messiah and King: "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

God has recorded numerous prophecies to give us assurance that his kingdom will be established in the earth. In many instances this kingdom is referred to as a mountain—"the mountain of the LORD." In Daniel's prophecy, this mountain first appears as a stone which smites the unholy kingdoms and governments of this present world. These, the prophet says, will be broken in pieces and pass away. Then the stone which smote them becomes a great mountain to fill the whole earth. (Dan. 2:34,35) Verse 45 of this chapter gives us a wonderful assurance concerning the kingdom of God. "Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."

BLESSINGS OF THE KINGDOM

The blessings of the kingdom are set forth with some detail in Micah 4:1-4. In verse 1, which is our opening text, it is fitting that the Lord's coming kingdom should be likened to a mountain. These prophecies were addressed in the first instance to the nation of Israel, and the nation of Israel was accustomed to being ruled from a literal mountain. Mount Zion in Jerusalem was the national headquarters of the government which ruled over Israel. It was here that David exercised his governmental control over the affairs of Israel, the chosen people of God. So when in this and other prophecies God speaks of his kingdom being established in "the top of the mountains," it would be easy for the devoted Israelite to realize that his God, Jehovah, was promising to set up a more powerful kingdom on earth than had ever been known before. This is exactly what God's coming kingdom will truly be.

In Micah's prophecy regarding the establishment of the kingdom, an additional point of explanation and interest is introduced. Here we read that this mountain is the "mountain of the house of the LORD." This also was familiar language to the Israelites. The Lord's ruling house in Israel was headed by David and his successors, but David and his fleshly successors will not be the ruling house of the future kingdom of God on earth.

Rather, God's ruling house will be composed of those chosen to be his sons, with Jesus being their Head. We read that when Jesus came at his First Advent, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."

(John 1:11,12) These were the first members of God's ruling house under Jesus. However, in all Israel there were not enough who received Jesus to have this honor bestowed upon them. Thus in God's due time he turned to the Gentiles, through the preaching of the Gospel, to find those worthy of completing the foreordained number that would make up his ruling house.—Acts 13:46

Much is written in the New Testament about those who have become believers following Pentecost, and who through the power of the Holy Spirit become the children, or sons, of God. To these the promise is that if they continue faithful they will reign with Christ as God's ruling house. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature [creation] waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."—Rom. 8:16-19

THE LORD'S WAYS

Micah's prophecy concerning the kingdom of God further declares that "people shall flow unto it." (Mic. 4:1) A similar prophecy in Isaiah 2:2-4 declares that "all nations shall flow unto it." In both of these prophecies we are assured that many from all peoples and nations who flow unto the kingdom of God will say, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of

Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”—vs. 3; Mic. 4:2

In this prophecy Mount Zion represents divine authority in the kingdom of God. This would, therefore, represent the spiritual phase of that kingdom, made up of Jesus and his faithful and glorified followers, the sons of God. We are told that the word of the Lord shall go forth from Jerusalem. Here is mentioned a wider aspect of the functioning of God’s kingdom, that which comes into personal contact with the human race here on the earth. This contact will be through the ancient servants of God, such as the faithful prophets of old, and others who served God faithfully prior to the First Advent of Jesus. Jesus said that “many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom.”—Matt. 8:11

The expression in the Greek text which is translated “sit down” can be likened to pupils sitting in front of their teacher. So the faithful servants of God of ancient times will be the ones who will communicate the word, or laws, of God to mankind in his kingdom. These we could think of as the symbolic “Jerusalem” of Micah’s prophecy from which the “word of the LORD” comes. We have here, then, both the spiritual, or heavenly, and the earthly phases of the kingdom illustrated—those in the earthly phase being representatives of those in the spiritual phase and communicating to the people the law of God received through Jesus and his church.

The people and nations in Micah's prophecy of God's kingdom indicate their desire to know and to follow the Lord's way. In that time "he shall judge among many people, and rebuke [correct] 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."—Mic. 4:3

It is interesting here to note the wide difference between God's ways and ways of mankind. Throughout the centuries misguided human philosophy has insisted that the only way to be assured of peace is to be prepared for war. Here, however, the Lord's way is seen to be different. When the people learn the Lord's ways they will give up planning and preparing for war. Instead, they will "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks." Instead of continuing to build up large armies, missiles, and weapons for defense, as it is styled, to thus be assured of peace, "nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Think of the enormous step forward this will be in solving the madness that is so prevalent in the world today! No longer will a mother feel that her child may be sent to the battlefield to be slaughtered. No longer will the resources of the world be drained in order to maintain vast military establishments, for they will learn war no more, neither will they practice war any longer. This is God's way, the way which will be instituted throughout the earth in his kingdom which will be established in the top of the mountains—that is, overseeing the affairs of all people. We rejoice in this aspect of

God's future remedy for this present troubled world!

Verse 4 of Micah's prophecy reads, "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." The vine and fig tree illustration pictures economic security for all mankind. One of the causes of so much fear in the world today is the lack of economic security. The hearts of many are filled with fear lest they lose their means of livelihood and be reduced to a welfare status, or even worse, homelessness. In the kingdom, however, none shall "make them afraid" through threats of being evicted from their homes, or through fear of hunger for themselves or their families. In fact, none shall make the people afraid for any purpose whatsoever, and we have the most blessed assurance that "the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it." What better assurance could we have than this of the workability and the success of God's remedy for the sin-sick world?

In the world today we occasionally hear someone say—even among those in high government positions—that if they could get people to do this or that, or if the government would pass this or that law, we would have peace and security. However, in God's remedy there is no place for any such uncertainties. God's solution is to be imposed completely, and by divine power—the "mountain of the house of the LORD"—upon all the people and nations. Obedience by all will be required. Mankind, though, will rejoice when they recognize how wonderful the Lord's ways really are, how after so many centuries of waiting and hoping and, on the part

of some, praying, God's way actually will be established in the earth!

MORE IS NEEDED

As wonderful as the blessings of the kingdom of God described in Micah's prophecy will be for a sin-sick and dying world, it would still come short of being a remedy for all human ills. Micah's prophecy shows that people will learn war no more, hence that there shall be no more war. It assures us that they will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; that is, they will use the resources now devoted to maintaining war and its armaments to the promotion of peace and goodwill among the nations. It assures us that there will be economic security; that no one will fear being dispossessed of house and home, or go hungry. All will be blessed by prosperity and plenty in every aspect of human need.

Even with all these blessings, however, the human race would still be living under a terrible blight of sorrow and suffering, for it would still be a dying race. We would have a world with hospitals thickly spread everywhere in all nations, filled with the suffering and the dying. We would still have mental institutions, likewise filled to overflowing. Every home would be afflicted sooner or later with dread diseases, and eventually, death. This would not be an ideal world.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matt. 6:10) We cannot imagine that in heaven there is carnal warfare, nor can we imagine hunger in heaven, nor can we imagine sickness and death. So

the kingdom of God will be a total remedy for the ills of mankind. The Bible assures us that this will be the case. Isaiah 25:6-9 portrays the kingdom of God as a mountain, or kingdom, and in it sickness and death will likewise be destroyed. Referring to many of the blessings which shall be provided by the Lord to satisfy the desire of the people, we are told that in this mountain the Lord of hosts will “make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.”—vs. 6

Continuing, the prophet says that God “will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations.” (vs. 7) This would seem to be a reference to the lack of knowledge that the vast majority of mankind have experienced through the ages concerning God and his ways. A great veil of ignorance in this respect has been cast over all people, and over the nations as well. It is because the nations have this veil spread over them that they imagine they can establish peace while preparing for war. They cannot now see through this veil to understand and appreciate the Lord’s ways. However, other prophecies show that the veil will be removed, and then “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”—Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14

In this mountain or kingdom of God, “He will swallow up death in victory.” (Isa. 25:8) The phrase “swallow up” in this text means to destroy; death, the prophet says, will be destroyed. Here we are promised that man’s greatest enemy, death, will be struck down by the forces of the kingdom of God

and will no longer be permitted to blight the happiness of all mankind, as has been the case in every generation, and among every family, since man's creation.

Verse 8 continues: "The Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it." What a changed world it will be under the kingdom of God when tears are wiped from all faces! Tears are here used as a symbol of sadness, of sorrow, and of pain. All this will be done away with, however, and joy shall break out in every city, in every town, in every village, and in every countryside.

The "rebuke" of God's people mentioned in verse 8 has been one of the characteristics of the reign of sin and death. Satan has stirred up his cohorts against those who are serving God, and they are rebuked, persecuted, and misrepresented, so that few are really prepared and courageous enough to take a determined stand for God's ways at the present time. Nevertheless, in God's mountain, the rebuke of his people will be taken away.

In still another of the kingdom promises of the Bible we are told that "that old serpent which is the Devil, and Satan," the great deceiver and oppressor of the people, will be bound during that time. (Rev. 20:2) Satan is, in reality, the cause of the sin-sick and dying condition of the world, both past and present. In the kingdom, he will no longer be able to deceive, oppress, and rule over the people. He will "deceive the nations no more." (vs. 3) How wonderful, indeed, are the prospects set forth

in God's Word! How bright should be our hope because of the promises of God!

In verse 9 of Isaiah 25 we read, "It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD [Jehovah]; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." It is true that the people have been waiting and longing for the very blessings which the kingdom of God will provide for them. They have not been aware of what the source of these blessings will be. Men have referred to better conditions using words such as "utopia" and other pleasing names, but when the blessings of the kingdom are showered upon them, one of the chief of these will be their understanding of the source.

Then, mankind will realize that the great God of love, who sent his Son to be the Redeemer and Savior of the world, is the Author and the Planner of this grand design which shall bring worldwide and lasting peace. This, together with health, everlasting life, and the knowledge of God himself and of his Son, will result in blessings that the world has not enjoyed since Adam and Eve were driven from Eden. Such will be God's remedy—permanent and for all people and nations—to cure the world of sin, sickness, death, and all of its past and present maladies. ■

*"And the work of righteousness shall be peace;
and the effect of righteousness quietness
and assurance for ever."*

Isaiah 32:17