

Heaven's Windows Opened

“It shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake.”
—Isaiah 24:18

IN OUR OPENING TEXT, “fear,” the “pit,” and the “snare” are used by the Prophet Isaiah as symbols of various troubles which would come upon the world in these last days. He indicates that as the people attempt to escape from one distressing circumstance, they would be confronted with another. What a true and graphic description this is of the world situation today!

There are, in fact, many more than three difficulties and dangers from which a fear-filled and distressed world is endeavoring to escape, and even if a partial solution is found for one problem, more distressing ones loom up in its place.

In the present world situation, and as we near the halfway point of 2022, it is perhaps worthy of note that three distinct, and yet related, events

have been at the top of the news headlines. This is not to suggest that these are equivalent to the fear, pit and snare spoken of by Isaiah, but they do illustrate the fact that multiple, interrelated troubles are presently upon the earth which are affecting the vast majority of mankind in one way or another.

First, there is the lingering Coronavirus pandemic, now entering its third year. Though its lethal results have declined considerably in many parts of the world since the spring of 2020, it is still having a considerable impact upon various segments of the world's population with regard to both physical and mental health.

Second, and much more recently, is the horror of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, seemingly instigated solely by the Russian leader. At the time of this writing, a month and a half since the conflict began, sources report that as many as 20,000 to 25,000 Ukrainian and Russian soldiers have been killed, plus nearly 1,500 Ukrainian civilians, though all of these numbers are likely understated. It is further estimated that more than 4 million Ukrainians have fled their homeland to other surrounding countries. These numbers say nothing of the widespread destruction of Ukrainian cities, homes, businesses, and other property, all of which has occurred within a brief span of time. How and when this conflict will end, we do not know, but it is a grim reminder of the ravages of war, and especially the tragedy of two nations who share so much in the way of history and cultural heritage doing battle against each other.

Third, and much the result of the events noted above, is the recent dramatic rise in inflation and

related increases in the cost of basic goods and services around the world, whether it be in the grocery store, at the gas pump, the housing market, or the many other areas of people's daily needs. The current situation in this regard not only weighs heavily on the individual consumer, but also, over time, could lead to a significant downturn in the economies of the world, most of which are already struggling to a greater or lesser degree.

WINDOWS OPENED—AND A GREAT SHAKING

With these and many other troubling world conditions in mind, we turn again to the words of Isaiah. He speaks in our opening text of the “windows from on high” being opened, and as a result, a great shaking of the “foundations of the earth.” To properly appreciate this, however, it is essential to realize that the “shaking” and resulting destruction of the “present evil world” is an evidence that God is preparing the way for his long-promised kingdom of righteousness, peace, joy and life.—Gal. 1:4; II Pet. 3:10-13

Verse 20 of Isaiah chapter 24 declares that the earth would “reel to and fro like a drunkard,” and that it would be “removed like a cottage,” or as rendered by the *American Standard Version*, “sway to and fro like a hammock.” The reason given for these destructive forces upon the earth is that “the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again.”

Regardless of how sincere and righteously inclined some world leaders may be, the stark fact is that the crumbling of present society, symbolically described in this prophecy as “the earth,” is the result of the

accumulated sins of government and other institutions which make up the “world” as we know it. Surely these transgressions, the source of which is no less than Satan himself, the “god of this world,” are resting heavily upon mankind today.—II Cor. 4:4; Rev. 12:9

CONFUSION AND PERPLEXITY

Confusion among the people is evident in all elements of society. World leaders are fighting an ever-increasing battle to keep the ships of state afloat, while religious leaders, Christian and non-Christian alike, are unable to explain the meaning of events which, to them, are completely at variance with their expectations of an ever upward progression of civilization. It is certainly the time foretold by Jesus when there would be upon the earth “distress of nations, with perplexity,” and when fear would be causing the hearts of mankind to fail as they look at the things coming upon the earth.—Luke 21:25,26

It is this very condition which marks the beginning of the prophetically foretold “day of the LORD.” It is thus described in contrast with the centuries of the past during which God has generally allowed evil to go unchallenged and unopposed so far as interference on his part was concerned. Now, however, and in contrast to the beneficent manifestation of his kingdom authority which is to come afterward, his hand is in the affairs of men to shake and root out every vestige of Satan’s evil world.

This “world,” or present social order, is symbolized in the Old Testament prophecies by the word “earth.” Isaiah wrote, “The earth is utterly broken down,

the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly.” (Isa. 24:19) These symbolic references to the earth take place during the “day of the LORD.”

The prophet further wrote: “The day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man’s heart shall melt: And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth; they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: ... For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. ... Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.”—Isa. 13:6-13

New Testament prophecies pertaining to the end of the present age use similar language. Paul foretold that in the “day of the Lord” there would come “sudden” or unexpected destruction upon the present world order “as travail upon a woman with child.” (I Thess. 5:1-4) Jesus said that the “powers of heaven shall be shaken.” (Luke 21:26) Paul stated that at the end of the age God would shake “not the earth only, but also heaven.” (Heb. 12:26) The “heaven” and the “earth” symbolize the spiritual and material aspects of the present social order, and as we have already noted, both civil and religious leaders are increasingly unable to find or implement solutions to the myriad troubles which are shaking civilization today.

In times past, the words of great ecclesiastical luminaries, symbolized appropriately in the prophecies by “stars,” were trusted by many to carry some weight of influence in helping to settle the differences among and within nations. This is no longer so. The little light they may have once had is no longer even recognized by a world in which past religious and moral norms have been put aside and are, hence, greatly deteriorated. Thus, the powers of the symbolic heaven designed to hold the world together are shaken and weakened critically.

OUR POSITION

The world today is suffering, bleeding, and filled with fear. We do not call attention to this condition as pessimists, however, but as optimists, because of our confidence in the promises of God to establish a new world order which will be under the righteous and just rulership of Christ. Man’s present failure is very apparent. It has been a long, downhill road from Eden until now, and soon will reach a climax of chaos and destruction—but this is not the end!

Rather, these events signal a new beginning just beyond the present trouble. It will be the beginning of a thousand-year “day” which, before its work is complete, will see mankind restored to perfection of life, with the glorious prospect of living in peace and joy forever upon the earth. (Jer. 23:5; II Pet. 3:8-10; Rev. 5:9,10; 20:6) Only those at present referred to by Paul as “brethren” are aware of this glorious meaning of the times in which we are living. This is because they are “not in darkness, that that day” should overtake them as a “thief in the night.”—I Thess. 5:1-4

“Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day,” Paul continued, and are “not of the night, nor of darkness.” (I Thess. 5:5) Indeed, the Lord is very gracious to the “brethren,” his spiritual family, for he reveals to them the meaning of the trouble and distress which surround them, and which is filling the hearts of the people with fear.

Concerning this special care of the Lord during the troubles associated with a dying world order, David wrote, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.”—Ps. 46:1-3

Being enlightened and strengthened by the prophecies and promises of the Scriptures, we are not only able to lift up our own heads and rejoice during these trying times, but we are also in a position to comfort others. (Luke 21:28) This we are admonished to do. For example, much of the 34th chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah is descriptive of the present day of trouble upon the world; then follows the 35th chapter, which presents a beautiful picture of the bright outcome of this time of fear, distress, and perplexity. It is in the 4th verse of this chapter that we read: “Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.”

This is the blessed message that has helped to remove fear from our own hearts as we look out upon a confused and suffering world, and here we are

invited to make it known to others. We can do this by using every opportunity we have to explain to those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness the real reason for the present world distress—that it is the day of the Lord’s vengeance upon the current world order under the rulership of Satan.

Our message will fall far short of what the Lord wants it to be, however, unless we also explain that the purpose for which God is now manifesting his wrath is that, once the present order is fully shaken and cast aside, he will offer the people eternal salvation through the kingdom of Christ. While the Lord has come “with vengeance,” he has also come to “save you.” What a blessed and complete salvation that will be, as pointed out to us in the remaining verses of the chapter!

“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing. ... An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called, The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there. And 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.”—Isa. 35:5-10

TROUBLE, THEN KINGDOM JOYS

Many of the prophecies which describe the troubles of the day of God’s vengeance are followed by

a beautiful description of the blessings of Christ's kingdom. Thus, in picturing the dark clouds of the "time of trouble" the prophets also reveal their "silver lining." This sequence of thought is found in the 24th and 25th chapters of Isaiah.

We have already quoted considerably from the 24th chapter concerning the fruitless efforts of the people to escape the troubles which come upon them, and about the shaking of the symbolic earth. It is then in the 25th chapter that we find the righteous kingdom of the Lord symbolically described as a "mountain," concerning which we quote below.

"In this mountain shall the LORD of hosts 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. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and 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. And 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; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."—Isa. 25:6-9

How glad we are that in addition to the blessings of prosperity, health, and life which will be provided through kingdom agencies, the "face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations" will be destroyed. This "covering" and "vail" seem clearly to refer to the blinding influences of Satan, the great deceiver of mankind. He is the

“god of this world” who has “blinded the minds” of the people.—II Cor. 4:4

However, when God’s blessings begin to flow out from the “mountain” of the Lord, Satan will be bound, rendering him powerless. Instead of the darkening influences of his evil rule hindering the people from knowing God, the knowledge of divine glory will fill the whole earth “as the waters cover the sea.”—Rev. 20:1,2; Hab. 2:14

The binding of Satan will also result in the “rebuke” of God’s people being taken away. Through his fallen, and often unwitting agents, Satan has opposed and persecuted God’s people during all the ages. For this reason, the righteous have suffered, but this also will be changed. With Satan bound, and finally destroyed, the righteous will “flourish,” and for them there shall be an “abundance of peace” forever.—Ps. 72:7

No wonder the happy response of the people to the blessings of the kingdom will be, “This is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” The same people are represented in Isaiah 26:12,13 as saying, “LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us. O LORD our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.”

One of the “other lords” which has had dominion over much of the world of mankind is the god of pride and self-accomplishment. The viewpoint of the vast majority, even of those who profess to believe the Bible, is that whatever of peace and righteousness may be established in the earth, it will be accomplished by human efforts. Only those

who have been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God have been made free from this god of self-accomplishment. These know that the only hope for the world is in the promise that “the zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”—Isa. 9:7

When the kingdom blessings begin to flow out to the people, they will quickly recognize the powerlessness of their former “lords,” and will rejoice in the true God of their salvation. How wonderful it is to know this in advance, and to be able to say to a fear-filled world, “Fear not,” for while the efforts of your human leaders will continue to fail, the God of heaven, through his appointed Christ, “will come and save you,” not only from the present time of distress and trouble, but also from death and the grave—for he will “swallow up death in victory,” and “wipe away tears from off all faces.”

Thus, while the storm clouds gather and become ever more ominous and threatening, we will not fear, but are reminded of Jesus’ words, “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption [deliverance] draweth nigh.” (Luke 21:28) This does not mean that we rejoice to see human suffering increasing. Rather, our joy is in the fact that soon this period of great trouble will come to an end. Then there will be no more death, sorrow, crying or pain, for these “former things are passed away.”—Rev. 21:4

The present destructive trouble is as the surgeon’s knife which removes a malignant growth that is killing the patient. Under the rule of Satan, sin and selfishness have produced a social order which, if allowed to continue, would sooner or later lead to the destruction of the human race itself. However,

God is in full control and, as promised in the Scriptures, is intervening at exactly the proper time to save the people, and in this we can rejoice.

We can rejoice that God will soon answer the prayer offered by millions over the past two-thousand years, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” (Matt. 6:10) A more detailed expression of this same sentiment is contained in a prayer by David, which reads:

“God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; That thy way may be known upon the earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear [reverence] him.”—Ps. 67:1-7

When this prayer is answered the people will know that the opening of the “windows from on high” will no longer produce the shaking which results in “fear,” the “pit,” and the “snare;” nor the scourge of a worldwide pandemic, the ravages of war, or the distress of economic uncertainty. Rather, there will be then the opening of another glorious “window,” resulting in mankind’s eternal joy. To those who willingly obey the righteous laws of the kingdom, the Bible promises that God will “open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” (Mal. 3:10) Let us continue to pray for that glorious day! ■