

Article of the Month
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As a World Dies

We could speak of troubles which are prophesied. We could speak of end-time events which Scripture tells us will soon come to pass. We could fill many pages with frightening things we all realize are going on around us. But sometimes it is just better to focus on what is coming that is so comforting to the soul. That will be our objective in this month's article. As an old world dies, we need the encouragements of what comes after its demise.

The old world IS dying. As is in so many places prophesied, its death-throes come in spasms — like birth pangs. (I Thessalonians 5:3) We all see that there are traumas, and then there are “breathing spaces” — which some interpret to mean that “everything will be all right now.” But most of us — particularly those familiar with the Holy Word — know that everything will NOT be alright now. All of the old world that we have known is in an irretrievable downward spiral. But, just as an expectant mother knows, the birth pangs, while they are most uncomfortable, are going to have the most wonderful of results. As the world dies, let's focus on the results!

CATEGORIES

Scripture refers to the four areas of the human experience which mankind is so used to dealing with: Society, Politics, Economics, and Religion. It will be convenient and gratifying for us to consider the wonderful futures foretold for all of these areas of the human experience. We can also add the category of Personal Blessings in our futures.

First, however, we can find joy in a text or two which speak of the turning point — the moment in the near future when the peaceable kingdom, for which men have so long prayed, will be launched. (Matthew 6:9-13)

Psalms 46:10 pinpoints the very moment of the passing of the old order and the inauguration of the Kingdom. “BE STILL, and know that I am God! I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.”

That, of course, is a statement and a moment which will affect society, politics, economics, and religion in the most total of ways! Politics will have disappeared because God, through Christ's Kingdom, will be the absolute Monarch!

And while the transition will not be the work of a day, Isaiah 14:7 points out that it will be rather sudden and dramatic. “The whole earth is at rest and is quiet! THEY BREAK FORTH INTO SINGING!” Can anyone not want that moment? To those with an educated faith, it is no less than an imminent reality. Can we not just imagine a whole world breaking spontaneously into song!

POLITICS

Once the Divine Monarch has taken over, the relief of an entire planet should quickly be felt as peoples everywhere give huge sighs of relief because they need no longer worry about the integrity of government. They will no longer need worry about which people to elect to faithfully represent their interests. They will no longer have to submit to tyrants and selfish men who usurp power for their own profit. Suspicion about government will vanish as all people come to realize that everything the new government is doing is for their benefit, and nothing is nefarious or prejudiced. Yea, THIS new government will bring them the opportunity to live forever in peace, health, security, and the best of personal liberties. Who could want anything better? There IS nothing better!

Scriptures abound with references to this new government. Here are a few favorites:

Isaiah 9:6, 7, speaking of Jesus’ reign, says, “The government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called WONDERFUL COUNSELLOR!...Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end...with judgment and with justice...even for ever. The zeal [heated determination] of the LORD of hosts WILL perform this!” And this reign will be world-wide as Psalm 2:8 promises to Jesus: “I will give thee...the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”

Perhaps the most eloquent statement of this new government is made in the early Weymouth translations of Ephesians 1:7-10. “So abundant was God’s grace, the grace which He, the possessor of all wisdom and understanding, lavished upon us when He made known to us **the secret of His will**. And this is in harmony with God’s merciful **purpose for the government of the world** *when the times are ripe for it* — the purpose which He has *cherished in His own mind* of restoring the whole creation to find its one Head in Christ; yes, things in heaven and things on earth, to find their one Head in him.”

As the new King and his government bring everything into subjection to peace and righteousness, he will have extraordinary discernment powers to be certain that his judgment of matters among men will be true and respected. As Isaiah 11:3 & 4 put it, “He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove with the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge.” No “hear-say!” No misinterpretations of what he sees! This King will read hearts! And he will mend hearts! NO government like that has ever existed.

ECONOMICS

Now we have landlords, and tenants, and mortgage-holders, and evictions, and the homeless. But then this will have all become something of the past. Isaiah 65:21-25 promises for mankind that, “They shall build houses and inhabit them. And they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. They shall NOT build and another inhabit! They shall NOT plant and another eat!” Taking economic advantage of others will be only a bad memory!

This same kind of secure food economy is reflected in Micah 4:4, where the prophet says, “They shall sit every man under his vine and fig tree; and none shall make them afraid.” The language is figurative. It certainly points to necessary food’s being supplied. But no one would care to live on a constant diet of figs and grape juice! The text actually has a hidden reference back to the political system (the Kingdom) which will ensure the security of necessary things. No “want” will exist. The “vine” is a reference to the rulership by Jesus and his faithful disciples. (John 15) The “fig tree” is a symbol of the restored Jewish nation which will serve as the earthly, visible center of the heavenly Kingdom. (Micah 4:2; Matthew 24:32, 33; Zechariah 3:10; 8:20-23; Psalm 45:16)

Psalm 67:6 is among many citations which promise the bountiful food production of a restored earth. “Then shall the earth yield her increase.” Isaiah 35:1 adds that “the desert shall blossom as the rose.” Psalm 145:15 & 16 add, “Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.” THAT is an economy that works!

The Bible refers to the rich and poor in this present world. But when it speaks of the Kingdom, these terms disappear! The gross inequities that now exist will have vanished! No mention is made of monetary matters in the Kingdom. Our imagination is free to run wild about the possibilities! There will be an economy free from investments, from excesses, from credit, from depressions, from debt, from want — even from money! The liberation of the human experience from these burdens will help all to stand tall and unburdened in ways we now can hardly dream of! Mankind will be free to be creative!

SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

The interactions by individuals and institutions are so varied and so complex as to affect nearly everything we do in life. In our current world, so much of social interaction is based on selfishness, prejudices, physical abilities or their lack, perceived superiorities and inferiorities, and innumerable other factors. The list just goes on and on. And, while Scripture is so rich in its statements as to how all of this will change, we will mention only a few inspiring examples.

Isaiah 11:9 makes a sweeping statement about the changes: “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [Kingdom], for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.”

Selfishness, prejudices, superiorities, etc., will all vanish if there will be nothing to hurt or to destroy! And the promise that secure and abounding true information about God will be there for everyone will assure that suspicions, conspiracies, fears and insecurities will evaporate. We can only imagine how that will change society! Indeed, if there are ANY questions, concerns, or needs, we are assured in Isaiah 65:24 that the King will supply those needs even before they can be expressed! “It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer. And while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” Have any of us ever had such satisfactory service from the institutions or individuals of this present world? Indeed, society WILL be different!

Isaiah in many ways is “The Kingdom Prophet.” His book is overflowing with marvelous descriptions of what is yet to come. While “nothing shall hurt nor destroy” in the Kingdom, Isaiah wants to tell us some specifics. In 2:3 & 4, Isaiah, after showing the source of rulership from “Zion” (the invisible rulers) and “Jerusalem” (the visible seat of power), tells us that the nations “shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

The lack of strife among peoples in itself will alter society beyond our ability to imagine. Manufacturing will not be dominated by “the military-industrial complex.” It will be turned to making the earth fruitful and productive and lovely. CREATIVITY will blossom! What will society be like when mankind need not fear death, profit, illness, selfishness, strife, competition, and a whole multitude of things which are adversarial to a glorious life? As Isaiah, once again, summarizes it for mankind, “They shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away!” (35:10)

Even the natural world will be changed in ways which cannot help but alter society in its relationship to its surroundings. Isaiah 11:6-8 tells of a relationship among humans and the animal population that sounds as though it could only be found in fairy tales! “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb.” “The leopard shall lie down with the kid.” “And a little child shall lead them!” “The cow and the bear shall feed [together]; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.” “The child shall play on the hole of the poisonous snake, and the young child shall put his hand on the den of other poisonous vipers” — all without threatening consequences!

And, as follows in verse 9, the inanimate world of seismic quakes and eruptions, weather destructions, droughts, and all else that has continuously plagued the race, will not be permitted to “hurt nor destroy” in this holy Kingdom. Social planning and enjoyment will have nothing in its way to hinder it.

RELIGION

The contradictions within religions and between religions have caused some of the greatest terrors of history. Clearly the Kingdom will have Christ and his glorified Church as its rulers. But we are not speaking of Christianity in the warped way it has been presented all over the world. Christ as King will in no way exclude all the various peoples of various current and past religions. After all, Isaiah did say that “the knowledge of the LORD will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.” There IS only one God. The problem is that most of humanity doesn’t know Him, and they have been hoodwinked by every deception that has been offered over the past millennia. But the conversion of all to the true God will be so easy once all know who He is, and what He is like, and what He is offering to them. Christ’s Kingdom will supply that needed information and spirit.

We saw in Psalm 46 that when God intervenes, one of the first offers He makes is “know that I am God.” Almost no one knows that He is God nor what He is— even among many professing Christians who have been fed disquieting and false information about Him and His character. In Zephaniah 3:9, it is God’s promise to men that “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.” “One consent!” Can we even conceive of that in our day? There is nothing that all men agree upon. But THEN there will be!

When the Apostle Paul writes to Timothy (I Timothy 4:10), he states that God “is the savior of all men — specially of those that believe.” Do we SEE that? The UNBELIEVERS will also be saved, restored, and blessed as they come into harmony with the new Kingdom. Also, there is now (before the Kingdom) a “special salvation” for those who believe and act on that belief NOW. They, if successful in their dedication, will be a part of the “body of Christ” or the “bride of Christ” — those who will be blessed to reign with him in order to bless all the families of the earth. (Revelation 20:6; 14:1) THAT objective was initially stated to Abraham, and it is the very basis of the true Christian religion — so much so that Paul, in Galatians 3:8, says that the promise to Abraham was the first statement of “the Gospel.” And this work of restoring all of mankind back to the perfection of Eden has been spoken of by “all of God’s holy prophets since the world began!” (Acts 3:20-22)

Thus, in the best of senses, religion will be replaced with reality! Truth will wipe away the refuge of lies. All suspicions of other religions, all professions of atheism or agnosticism, all variant philosophies and doctrines, will vanish in the face of the realities of the Kingdom! And all who have been in error will not suffer for it. They will, instead, become faithful believers because of the facts in front of their faces.

PERSONAL JOYS

The biggest personal blessings, however, will be the things that happen to the world as individuals. And the new world will bring about things in their bodies and minds which will make life astoundingly rewarding and cherished.

Personal health has got to be a major consideration. As Isaiah records the matter in 33:24, “The inhabitant shall not say, ‘I am sick.’” What more could we want? But there IS more.

JOB 33:24 & 25 informs us that God will “Deliver him from going down into the grave; I have found a ransom! His flesh shall be fresher than a child’s; he shall return to the days of his youth!” Not only does the new world promise an end to dying, but a return to youthfulness. This all seems like dreams! But they are not. They are promises.

Isaiah 35:10 takes it one step further. Not only will dying stop and youthful health and vigor return, but “The ransomed of the LORD shall return [from death] 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.” The awakening and restoration of all who have ever lived will begin! It IS worth singing about!

Let’s go one step further yet. When the resurrection process has been completed for all of these people, life will never end. In the words of Luke 20:36, “Neither can they die any more, for they are...the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.” The word, “resurrection” means a complete “re-standing” — a re-standing with God and a re-standing in perfection.

The process of resurrection will go on for the better part of the thousand years of Christ’s reign (I Corinthians 15:24-26). Isaiah shows the removal of all kinds of pains and problems that will vanish in this process: “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing, for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.” Revelation 21:4 & 5 echo Isaiah’s words: “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying — neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, ‘Behold! I make all things new!’”

Yes! The former things (this old dying world) will pass away; and God, through Christ, will make everything new and beautiful!

MEANWHILE

It will be easy to fret and fear as we see an old world die in “a time of trouble such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be [again].” (Matthew 24:21, 22) But as a wise man once said, “Revealing what shall be, counteracts the influence of what now is.” We see, just from a simple sampling of the promises, “what SHALL BE.” It is no less than inspiring. It is comforting to those who can accept these promises. But everyone will be partakers of these blessings even if they cannot now accept these truths. “The zeal of the LORD of Hosts WILL PERFORM THIS!”

Our God is magnificent in His planning for us, and for the character traits which make Him infallible, all-powerful, and beloved. As the world dies, we will just be beginning to live! Amen.

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