

World Problems Solved

*“Nevertheless we,
according to his
promise, look for
new heavens and
a new earth,
wherein dwelleth
righteousness.”*

—II Peter 3:13

THE HUMAN RACE SEEMS

to go from the throes of one great world crisis into another. The cleverest minds of the powers have been unable to find a common ground for the solution of their mutual problems in

international affairs. Each is vexed with the other. Each is expressing recriminations concerning the other's motives and sincerity.

When countries are as they exist today; when the plight of the world is beyond the ability of man to control; when the wisdom of the wise men has perished; when the knowledge of the prudent men of the earth is ineffective; when the diplomats and statesmen of Earth do not know what to do; when, as today, men's hearts are failing them for fear, many people instinctively turn to God to find the answer, to find the remedy for these conditions, and to learn how to solve their problems.

We all agree that the world has problems. The question in the minds of many is, will it be possible to solve these challenges? There are the problems of a political and economic nature both within nations and internationally. There are the ongoing social upheavals and troubles in the various religious systems of the world. Today, also, long-standing moral standards and norms are under attack as they are being challenged by many as never before in societies throughout the world. These, and other problems, are not merely those to be found in isolated nations but are affecting the entire fabric of civilization.

Human selfishness has long been a barrier, keeping the human race from solving what otherwise might have been simple problems. Despite the fact that there is an abundance of food in certain parts of the earth, famine and starvation continue even now in the 21st century on a significant scale in some parts of the world. Food is wasted or destroyed for economic or political reasons, while people lack basic nourishment because they live in countries with a different economy or fewer resources.

In the area of international trade, while one country needs what another country has, and still another country produces what yet another needs, mankind has been unable to organize a satisfactory and fair method of exchange. On the surface, this appears to be a simple problem. However, citing just one example in recent history, when one country expressed its desire to give away some of its surplus food, other nations objected because that would spoil their markets. Thus we see that the resolution of the issue of fair trade is not as simple as it at

first appears, especially when we factor in the human tendency toward greed and selfishness.

Likewise, in the case of world conflicts, mankind has never yet solved the problems of preventing increasingly destructive wars. Such is true, even while the majority of people hate war and bloodshed, and desire to live in peace and security. In most cases, however, the lust for fame and power among leaders of the nations has won out over the peoples' desires to live in harmony with their fellow man.

THE BIBLE'S TESTIMONY

While history tells us of the various reasons for and the events surrounding the rise and fall of nations, the Bible tells of the rise and the fall of worlds. It speaks of the "world that was," which came to an end at the time of the Flood. It tells us of the "present evil world," or age, which ends with various destructive forces. It also predicts a "world to come" and what we may expect in this new time of tomorrow. (Gal. 1:4; Luke 18:30) The Apostle Peter in II Peter 3:6 declares, "The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." We know that it was not the literal Earth which was destroyed by water, for we are all still living on the same planet that existed before the Flood.

Let us also notice the words of John the Baptist as recorded in Luke 3:16,17: "I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn

with fire unquenchable.” Here is a prophecy that was fulfilled concerning Israel. As prophesied by John the Baptist, Jesus came, and he did baptize with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. He also baptized with fire, culminating in the complete destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Sometimes people pray for the baptism of fire. How little they know for what they pray. Those who were baptized by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost were Israelites indeed, who recognized in Jesus their Messiah and Savior, but they were few in number. “He came unto his own [people], 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) The remainder of the Jewish nation knew not the time of their visitation.—Luke 19:44

The Master, following his triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem, spoke prophetically of the whole nation of Israel, saying, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou which killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” (Matt. 23:37,38) As a nation Israel was burned as chaff in the time of fiery trouble which marked the end of the Jewish Age, a time during which God had separated them as his “special people” from other nations and bestowed upon them special favor.—Deut. 7:6; Amos 3:2

It was to that destruction that our Master referred when he spoke of their baptism of fire. It was a fire of national destruction and desolation. Various steps were taken to hinder the complete

desolation of the nation of Israel, but all efforts failed. The prophecy had to be fulfilled. Truly their house had been left unto them desolate. Thus we see that the foretold baptism of fire that destroyed and desolated Israel is a prophecy which has already been fulfilled. Therefore, it serves as the key to understanding the fire of our day. It was not literal fire then; it is not literal fire now.

THE EARTH ABIDES FOREVER

The majority of Christian people have been taught to believe the end of this “present evil world” will come with the literal burning and destruction of the earth. This teaching is not in accord with the Word of God. In Ecclesiastes 1:4 we find the simple statement, “The earth abideth for ever.” This plain scriptural assurance is in harmony with the Word of God through the Prophet Isaiah, that he created the earth “not in vain,” but he “formed it to be inhabited.”—Isa. 45:18

God promised Abraham, “Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever.” (Gen. 13:14,15) If the earth were to be destroyed, God’s “forever” promise to Abraham concerning the land which he saw would go unfulfilled. However, we know from the Scriptures that God does not break any of his promises.—Isa. 55:10,11; Heb. 6:16-18

Some find it difficult to believe that the earth itself is not to be destroyed, because of the statement of the apostle: “But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved

unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. ... The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”—II Pet. 3:7,10

While some believe that this earth will be destroyed by fire, none would say they believe that God’s throne will be destroyed. The Bible says heaven is God’s throne. (Isa. 66:1) Yet, Peter specifically declares that the heavens as well as the earth will be dissolved with “fervent heat.” What does it mean?

There must be a more logical explanation of Peter’s prophecy than that which has been given us by ecclesiasticism. We believe that this is an account of the current period of trouble through which this present evil world is passing. As the flood of water ended the old world; and as the fire of trouble ended Jewish national life when the Masada fortress, near the southwest coast of the Dead Sea, fell in AD 73, so in our present day civilization has been receiving its baptism of fire. The fire is symbolic of trouble and destruction, not of Earth’s literal destruction.

The heavens represent the present religious world which is crisscrossed with unbelief, and these powers are being shaken. The earth symbolizes our social, political, and financial systems, and the “elements” referred to in this prophecy illustrate the various factors that constitute our world—the capital and labor elements, the rich and the poor divisions of society, and the bureaucratic and economic components of the present order.

The works that shall be burned up are the hate and war, the graft and greed, the selfishness, and the

jealous ruthlessness which are manifest on every hand as the “works” of this world. That is the “world” which is being destroyed, and every one of us should be glad to see this old failing order pass away.

The Prophet Zephaniah declares: “The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD’S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.”—Zeph. 1:14-18

A SILVER LINING

As we see the trouble in the earth constantly gaining momentum, we realize the ominous possibilities which are confronting the world. However, as students of God’s Word we see a silver lining to these dark clouds of trouble. The Apostle Peter, after speaking of the destruction of those things which are out of harmony with God, gives us the words of encouragement and hope found in our opening text—the promise of a “new heavens and a new earth,” in which righteousness dwells. Here

we are directed by the apostle to a promise of God which was given many centuries before and recorded in Isaiah 65:17-25. Peter believed this promise, which begins, “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.”

Now notice what the nature of this new order will be. “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: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.”—vss. 21-25

Thus the prophet looked down the corridor of time and saw a new earth, even though it will be on this same planet, not based on war, selfishness and greed. This is the promise to which Peter referred. It is the prophecy that had stirred his mind as to the blessings which would come to the earth in the establishment of a new world order. This is what caused him to speak of a “new heavens and a new earth.” We may also look forward in anticipation to the time when the human race will be able to enjoy the fruits of its labor in the midst of happy, Edenic conditions, wherein righteousness, health and peace will dwell.

One of the most comprehensive prophecies concerning this present transition period, and the assurance that, after the trouble, conditions of peace and security will be established, is found in Zephaniah 3:8,9. This prophecy reads: "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent." Notice that this prophecy explains the fire which will destroy the old order. It is the fire of God's jealousy, the fire of trouble, and not literal fire, because of the fact that there are people who remain after the destruction of the old order who will then "call upon the name of the LORD."

"A PURE LANGUAGE"

It is difficult to discern a "pure language," a pure religious message, in this present old order, because of the different creeds and theories that men have created to their own confusion. Today there are many voices, many languages, all claiming to uphold the divine message. In this chaos of conflicting philosophies, it is difficult indeed to discern the voice of God.

However, after the symbolic fire of trouble has done its work, after the present ecclesiastical heavens have lost their power, and after the present earth with its social, political, and financial elements has been brought to a condition of

powerlessness, the mist and fog of prejudice and superstition will be lifted from the minds of the people. Then the pure message of truth concerning the glories of the coming kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will shine forth as a pure language to tell of the lengths and breadths, and the heights and depths, of the love of God. According to this prophecy the result will be that all people will call on the name of the Lord and serve him with “one consent.”

However, as we speak of this new day and the blessings it shall contain, and as we are assured that the reign of Christ will solve the problems of the earth, questions will present themselves to many. “Why has this condition not been established long ago, seeing that nearly 2,000 years have passed into history since Jesus finished his earthly ministry?” “Why have we had to wait so long in sickness and death?” “What has God been doing concerning this glorious kingdom from the time of Calvary until the present?”

AN INTERIM WORK

There are many scriptures which assure us that God has not been inactive during this long interlude. Rather, beginning at Pentecost and continuing until the present time, the purpose of God has been to choose the “bride” of Christ. (Rev. 19:7; 21:2) Altogether these will be but a “little flock” as compared to the billions of Adam’s children, but they have been, as Jesus described, “the salt of the earth.”—Luke 12:32; Matt. 5:13

These are those who have heard the invitation of the Master, when he declared, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross,

and follow me.” (Matt. 16:24) This group of loyal, faithful Christians has endeavored to follow in the footsteps of the Master with the assurance that, as children of God, they will live and reign with Christ. The Apostle Paul speaks of them in Romans 8:17 saying, “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.”

This “little flock” will “reign with Christ a thousand years,” assisting in the establishment of the new world wherein righteousness will dwell. (Rev. 20:6) The world’s problems of today will be solved through the application of the principles upon which Christ’s kingdom will be built. In that kingdom, none shall hurt nor offend, for “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.” “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given;” he becomes the “Prince of Peace,” for he will establish peace.—Isa. 9:7,6

A RIGHTEOUS WORLD

Thus righteousness will at last be man’s heritage in a new world order under the rulership of Jesus Christ and his faithful “little flock.” The first world ended with the destruction of all those who were out of harmony with God, but Noah and his house were protected and saved. The second world is ending with the destruction of those elements of hate and greed and war which are so out of harmony with God and the principles of Jesus Christ. His

church, through divine providence, is also saved and, being exalted, will reign with him.

The third world will see justice laid to the line and “righteousness to the plummet.” It will see the power of truth “sweep away the refuge of lies,” upon which the old order has been built. (Isa. 28:17) The human race, having learned well the eternal lesson of sin through the experiences of more than six thousand years of history, will rejoice in the opportunity to willingly obey the new rule of righteousness.

Then will be fulfilled the prophecy of Revelation 21:1-5: “I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; ... And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. 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.”

Therefore, our message to you at the beginning of another year is that world problems will be solved through the establishment of God’s kingdom, under the righteous rule of Christ and his “bride.” There will be a “new heavens and a new earth,” a new world order in which righteousness will dwell. Indeed, that is what we long for when we speak that oft-repeated prayer, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”—Matt. 6:10 ■