

## HOPE FOR A WORLD IN CRISIS

*“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...” — Psalms 46:1, 2*

The bubble that burst in the housing market over two years ago has initiated a cascade of global financial disasters. Major financial institutions are failing at an unprecedented rate, and the global meltdown of financial markets is affecting every aspect of society worldwide. Unemployment statistics in the United States are also climbing at an alarming rate, and, internationally, statistics are staggering. Although governments around the world apply temporary band-aids to financially ailing corporations, many may still bleed to death.

### WHERE WILL IT ALL END?

What world governments are doing could be compared to the story of the little Dutch boy who placed his finger in the hole of the dyke. He did not see the mighty ocean waiting to burst forth from the other side. Does the Bible hold out hope that man’s efforts will hold back the mighty ocean of trouble? Ezekiel 7:19 prophesied: *“They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD...”* This and many other prophecies indicate that there will come a time when the stock markets will *not* rally, the governments will *not* be able to bail out the crumbling industries, and the world as we know it will end in financial ruin. Does God intend to bring an end to the downward spiral of despair?

The present order of things must give way for the *New Jerusalem*—the Kingdom to come where God’s will is done throughout the earth as it is done in heaven. (Revelation 21:1-4; Matthew 6:10) This is the *silver lining* to the storm clouds of trouble looming over the earth at this time. God will not try to fix the present institutions, but will replace them with His righteous Kingdom. *“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.”* Isaiah 2:2

Isaiah set the time line for the ushering in of God’s Kingdom shortly after the restoration of Israel to her homeland—a prophetic event that is even now being fulfilled. (Isaiah 40:1-5) Then, *“every valley [the poor, oppressed world of mankind]*

*shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill [the corrupt kingdoms of this world] shall be made low... and the glory of the LORD shall be revealed...”* This prophecy discloses God’s wonderful plan to bring down imposing governments, corrupt financial and corporate institutions, hypocritical religious systems and selfish political and social elements.

Yes, God intends to cleanse the earth from the control of Satan, the god of this *present evil world*, and his servants. (2 Corinthians 4:4; Galatians 1:4) This leveling destructive work will prepare the way for the righteous reign of Christ and his Church. Then, under their benevolent rulership, *“the*

*inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness”* without the fetters of selfish and oppressive powers. Isaiah 26:9

### BE NOT AFRAID

Though we are in the midst of the storm clouds of trouble, God’s Word teaches that those full of faith *“...shall not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day...”* (Psalm 91:5) But, **how is it possible to not be afraid** when the news is filled with these terrifying *end times* events? Like a patient preparing mentally for a serious operation, there is a certain foreboding, and yet, a feeling of relief in knowing that the illness will be cured. In this case, God is the great physician who will skillfully remove the diseased systems which now plague mankind. Knowing God’s truth in the Scriptures, and, through these, understanding His plans and purposes will bring peace in the midst of these stormy times. *“I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust... His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.”* Psalm 91:2 and 4



Indeed, truth—a faith based upon knowledge—is the *shield and buckler* of a child of God. **Knowing what God is doing in the earth in preparation for His Kingdom is critical to dispelling fear.** A Christian's faith must be built upon a solid foundation of truth in order to survive the storms of life.

The Scriptures are filled with prophecies which provide the necessary information a Christian needs to be prepared for the time in which he lives. However, the understanding of such prophecies will only be revealed as they become due. Jesus said, *"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."* (John 16:12) Thus, truth unfolds as God sees that it will help His servants. For example, God said to Daniel, *"Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.."* (Daniel 12:9) Although Daniel prayed for understanding of the end time prophecies, it was not time for him to know the interpretation. But, now, we are living in the *time of the end*—the *due time*—and God's people have been given great insight and understanding of the very prophecies which Daniel was told to *seal up*.

God has provided an understanding of prophecy at this time so that His children will not be in distress when they see these events unfold. However, a misinterpretation of prophecy can cause confusion and unfounded fear. And so, it is important to *prove all things*. (1 Thessalonians 5:21) On Christian bookshelves today there are many books which sensationalize and fictionalize the events of prophecy. In these books, highly symbolic passages are interpreted as literal, and although the Bible does indicate trouble in the earth at this time, the wrong interpretation of Scripture can totally distort the loving character, plans and purposes of God. Symbolic passages of prophecy depict an everlasting destruction of **systems—not people**.

Thus, it is a good practice to square every doctrine with two pivotal truths: 1) Jesus' *ransom for all to be testified in due time*; and 2) The fact that *"God is love"* and *"His compassions fail not."* (1 Timothy 2:3-6; 1 John 4:16; Lamentations 3:22) We should test doctrinal interpretations to see if they are in harmony with the *loving* plan of God who has provided a full and fair opportunity of salvation for *all* mankind. This is the *hope* for a world now in crisis, and it should set our minds at peace.

### PEACE ON A TROUBLED SEA

The night before Jesus died upon the cross, he spoke these words to his closest followers: *"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33) He did not hide the fact that there would be difficult times ahead. But, though he warned his followers of troublous times to come, he also assured them

that he would be with them, guiding every affair of their lives. He promised comfort and guidance through the truth of the Scriptures. John 16:13

Sometimes, however, even with a firm faith built upon the knowledge of God's plans and purposes, experiences may overwhelm us and our faith begins to sink. The Apostle Peter experienced this, when, in his zeal, he began to walk on the water toward his Master. But when the waves became rough, Peter began to sink, and he called to the Lord for help. (Matthew 14:22-33) This illustrates to the Christian that, when his experiences of life become rough like waves in the ocean, he is to keep his focus firmly on Jesus for help and strength,

and to trust that God will provide every need through His Son. Philippians 4:19

Yes, a full and abiding faith in God, which will provide peace in time of trouble, is dependent upon, and proportionate to, the **development** of our faith. *"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."*

As we grow in knowledge, we grow in faith, and we come to see that our all-loving and all-wise Father is in control. We learn to trust Him, even in difficult times, because we know that He has a good purpose for everything that occurs in our lives. *"All things [not just some things] work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."* Romans 8:28

### BUT WHY DO CHRISTIANS HAVE TO EXPERIENCE TROUBLE?

Why do Christians have to endure the pain associated with the destruction of this old world order? Many Christians are losing their jobs, some are losing their life's savings, and some are even watching their families go homeless and hungry. Why doesn't God protect them from these troubles? There are two primary reasons why God permits His children to endure hardness under the pressures of this world in crisis.

1) *"Every test that you have experienced is the kind that normally comes to people... but at the time that you are put to the test, He will give you the strength to endure it..."* (1 Corinthians 10:13 GNB) In other words, the Christian is not exempt from the common troubles of this life. True heart sympathy can only be gained by going through the hard experiences of others. Jesus is referred to as a *"sympathetic high priest,"* and like our Master, Christians must be developed through the trials of life to have sympathy for mankind and their sufferings.

2) At the end of their Christian journey, the followers of Christ will be tested upon their faith. Therefore, God-like character must be developed over time by experience, and then tested to be proven worthy of a *crown of life*. (Revelation 2:10) *"The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus*





*Christ...*” (1 Peter 1:7) For those who seek the reward of living and reigning with Christ in God’s Kingdom, they must have a developed, crystallized character which has remained loyal to Him, even under pressure. This is why God permits repeated testings.

This Christian era has been a time to educate and develop a select group of faithful saints taken out from this imperfect and corrupt world—a *Bride* for God’s Son. This *Bride class*, also known as *the body of Christ* or *the Church*, will be willing to submit to the same kind of death as her bridegroom—a sacrificial death. “*For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection...*” (Romans 6:5) For one this may mean giving up a successful career to live a more humble and simple life, and thus, be more available for service to God. For another it may mean the alienation from loved ones who misunderstand God’s Truth. For yet another it may mean a life of illness or tragedy, and the joyful acceptance of enduring this as a momentary affliction during this short life. Only God knows what is best for His children’s education, and by providence, He will work *all things together for their good*. (Romans 8:28) Yes, for the Christian, “*...though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*” 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Thus, Christians learn through their experiences to have the same *attitude* or *mind* found in Christ, “*who for the joy set before him endured the cross.*” (Philippians 2:5; Hebrews 12:2) The joy which allowed Jesus to endure the heaviness of his cross—a cross which he bore for three and a half years—was the knowledge of God’s loving plan for all mankind. Having confidence in God’s plan, and how it would benefit His entire creation, is what provided the joy that helped Jesus endure his cross. This is the same joy which will carry the faithful through every trial. And so, we can rejoice, even though there are times of fear and distress, for we realize that there is a purpose to the suffering.

### CONCERN FOR THOSE STILL IN DARKNESS

Although we gain peace as we gain understanding, we may still have concern, not for ourselves, but for our loved ones who, thus far, have failed to put their trust in God and who live contrary to His commandments. Jesus is the Christian’s advocate, but what will happen to those who have not accepted Christ now? “*He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*” (1 John 2:2) “*...we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men,*

*specially of those that believe.*” (1 Timothy 4:10) Here again, the knowledge of God’s loving character and plan gives us peace and hope. When God’s will is finally done on earth as it is being done in Heaven, He then “*...will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*” (1 Timothy 2:3-6) Our *due time* may be now, but others will be given a full opportunity for developing Christ-likeness in the future Kingdom of God on earth.

Imagine a time when God’s loving Son—not Satan—will be the ruling prince in all the earth. (1 Corinthians 15:22-26)

Picture the world of mankind learning righteousness in a time when Satan and his demon legion are not allowed to interfere in earth’s affairs. (See Isaiah 26:9 and Revelation 20) Find rest in the fact that Christ returns with *healing in his wings*—a ruler who will judge and reign, along with his Bride, in righteousness. Malachi 4:2; Isaiah 9:6, 7; Revelation 22:17

Yes, there is hope beyond this present *time of trouble* upon the world. This fearful season at the end of the Christian era *will* usher in an age of blessing. Christ and his Bride—sympathetic because of their experience with pain and suffering during this *present evil world*—will be the honored agents of God in bringing the lost world of mankind back into harmony with Him. (Isaiah 35:1-10) At that time, those *now blinded* by error, sin and selfishness will *begin to see* that the permission of evil has

been for their education and development, so that their hearts might be ready and willing to accept the new government. “*Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment... And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly.*” Isaiah 32:1-4

The cleansing work now abroad throughout the world will have been a useless torment unless the world of mankind is given an opportunity to use this experience to make positive choices in His Kingdom soon to come. God’s wisdom is too broad to limit compassion for His poor groaning creation. Our great physician only wounds to heal. “*For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory... The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace...*” (Haggai 2:6-9) Then, all the troubles and tribulations of the past and present, instead of being useless sufferings, will be valuable guides toward righteousness. Revelation 20:6 Moffatt translation; 1 Corinthians 6:2; Psalm 96:13





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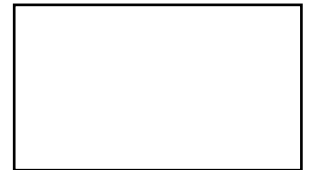
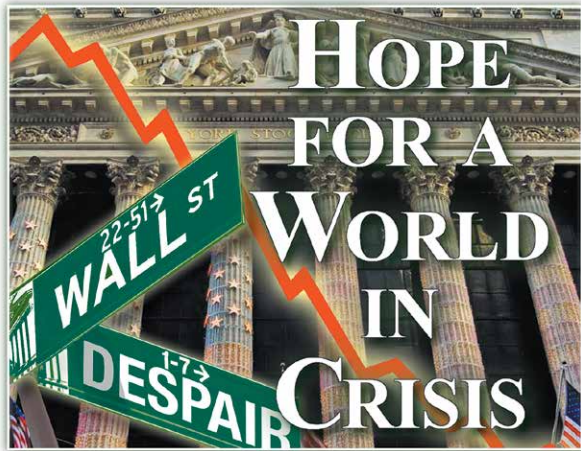


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