

The Bible

For Our Times

“WEeping MAY ENDURE FOR A NIGHT, BUT JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING.” PSALM 30:5

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Putting Out the Fires of Anarchy...

Serving God “Shoulder to Shoulder”

“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 [‘shoulder to shoulder’ NAS].” Zephaniah 3:8-9

Too many of us feel perplexed—some are even faint with fear—for what we see happening on the world scene. As Jesus prophesied about “the day” at the end of the age, “Upon the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world...” (Luke 21:25-26).



As the year 2008 began we were exposed to scenes of tribal conflict—this time in postcard perfect Kenya. These scenes vividly reminded us of Darfur, the “anarchy” of Rwanda and other the genocides and religiously motivated wars that bathed the last century with the blood of millions of innocents. Images appear in the media briefly, but soon we were either numbed or of necessity distracted by yet other crises, diversions—or football games. Few of us are prepared to keep the flames of Kenya fresh in our minds, much less be able to do anything to assist Kenyans directly—even if we knew what to do. Will Kenya’s Luo tribesmen go the way of the Tutsis of Rwanda? What will eventually come of UN intervention? Will it be an effete useless effort? How far and wide will such “fires” spread?

Gathering of the Nations

Globalization and its global factory and marketplace are another source of potential destabilization and financial combustion. The world’s economies are now lined up as so many dominos precariously placed, interconnected and capable of bringing each other down. Even the growing credit crisis will play into the gathering of all nations spoken of by the prophet Zephaniah (3:8) who wrote that God will “gather” the nations to pour out the “fire of His wrath.” And while all that sounds awful, there is hope. *God has a plan!*

After the “fire” of that day, God will turn to the people and they will call on His Name and serve Him “shoulder to shoulder.” Thus understood the earth does not literally burn up. If so, who would be left to turn to God? But after the “fire” that is just what all people will do—they will turn to God.

Brush fires after War

The 20th Century has experienced significant changes in international conflict. Wars have led to revolutions and revolutions have led to anarchistic brush fires. The “Great War” of 1914, the “Russian Revolutions” of

1917 were benchmarks of global change. The imperialism that helped ignite World War I, also pressed African tribes and Eurasian ethnic communities together within artificial borders. The fading of totalitarian Soviet might in Eurasia and the departure of Imperial powers left behind powder kegs of resentment and mistrust ready to explode. And explode they did! Yugoslavia and Rwanda being just two examples. Is there a pattern?

The war-revolution-anarchy machine continues to wreak unspeakable devastation on humanity. The machine is driven by any number of forces—

- Economic scarcity, overpopulation, famine, poverty, disease or fear of these;
- Social conflicts, ethnic revenge or tribalism bloodletting;
- Religious zeal to gain converts, dominate or annihilate;
- Political power hungry factions.

High profile, targeted wars, in Afghanistan or Iraq may tend to ignore the true picture of a worldwide Islamic jihad mentality. What role terrorism in the 21st Century will play in the “war-revolution-anarchy” scenario may not be clear, but the reality on the ground is that religious, social, economic and political issues are still at the root cause. Unsolvable conflicts will continue to press many of earth’s billions under the wheels of crushing war machines.

The widely praised, but expensive, democratic elections which put President Joseph Kabila of Congo in power have left the West blind to the corruption—some attributed to multinational corporate mining involvement. Tragic is the cost in human lives—estimated to be 5.4 million since 1998. Yes, Congo is a disaster. But how long will its crisis remain within its borders? How long the major powers ignore it and remain isolated and safe from the conflicts? Kenya, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Sudan’s Darfur all are shouting for help. Unheard cries will not go away—rather their “fire” can spread.

Fires Around the World

Fire is destructive. There is nothing more destructive to society than anarchy. The Scriptures define anarchy, in principle, as the fighting of “every man’s sword ...against his brother and...neighbor” (Ezek. 38:21; Isaiah 19:2). Through earth’s history, there have always been bursts of anarchy. But since World

War I—when the world gathered for the Great War—the nations have gathered as never before—and are now so interdependent that “fire” in one place can easily spread. However, African States now burning with tribal wars seem so removed from Western society.

The heroic Canadian U.N. Commander, General Romeo Dallaire, assigned to Rwanda (1993-1994), found himself helpless in the face of a 100-day, 800,000-person genocide because the Western powers—who could have made a difference—did not help. He said, “Because there was no self-interest....No oil! ...They didn’t come because some humans are [considered] less human than others.” But will anyone really be isolated from the “fires” of this century?

A Climactic Vision

The Scriptures actually give us a model of the sequence that we have seen since World War I. Fleeing a death threat by his arch enemy Jezebel, Elijah the Prophet of the LORD escaped to Mount Horeb (I Kings 19:1-12). For His Prophet Elijah, the LORD produced an awesome display of power—first a “wind,” then an “earthquake,” then “fire”—but finally “a still small voice.” That dramatic display was a prophecy symbolic of the end time: winds of war; socio-political earthquakes or revolutions and fiery anarchy—all before the peaceable Kingdom. The 20th century saw two World Wars. It witnessed more than half of the world’s population hit with revolutions and social upheavals. It saw anarchistic genocide in Turkey in 1915 and in the Congo as the century ended (the worst human crisis since WW II).

Yes, the LORD has cause to be angry with the nations. Former colonial and imperial powers will bear their share of responsibility. Multinational corporations have done much to control the world’s resources and production. Copper, gold and diamond rich Congo—are being pillaged while the profits earned never reach the native population. Congolese government leaders and their crowd are kept well paid to achieve free reign for corporate exploits. But a fiery day of reckoning is approaching.

Causes of Anarchy

Education leads to demands for rights and liberties. Selfishness generates pride and lust for power. Governments hold the people in place, but the “fire” of anar-

chy will flare up when there is no government—whether good or bad—to maintain order.

Colonialism kept African tribes under its thumb. But as Britain, France Belgium and Portugal fled Africa, artificially created neo-nations were left with new power bases igniting tribal suspicions and rivalry. The results have been chaotic—and now anarchistic.

After the “fire”—A Glorious Home

Yet the Prophet Zephaniah wrote that after God gathers the nations and pours out the “fire” of His wrath—He will “turn to the people” the “pure language” of Truth—and they will call on His Name and serve Him “shoulder to shoulder.”

Once again this means that the earth will not literally burn up. For then there would be none left to turn to God. But after the “fire” that is just what all people will do—they will turn to God.

The “Armageddon” of end times is generally misunderstood. What began in the last Century is bad enough to be described as the Biblical Armageddon, but has it already started? If not, the gathering of the nations in leagues, unions and economic conferences makes Armageddon seem close (Rev. 16:14-16).

God wants man to learn the valuable lessons of the consequences of sin and selfishness. But the core problem is the human heart—both for the people on the street as well as those in power with authority. God's Plan will soon climax, and “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain” (Psalm 76:10). The Bible affirms that God is in control. What might be excessive—God will step in and halt (Matt. 24:22). Thus man's wrath will ultimately serve for his own ultimate good to God's praise.

THE BIBLE STUDENTS CONGREGATION OF NEW BRUNSWICK—WHO ARE THEY?

The Bible Students Congregation is a completely autonomous, non-denominational Christian fellowship. This fellowship has no central head, office or central publishing house. It maintains an association through conventions and enjoys a fellowship that is worldwide. We welcome all to share with us in the study of God's Word. There is no organization to join and no creed to affirm. Our services are as simple as the church in the days of the Apostles. Our congregation benefits from the prayer support of one another and our fellowship is warm and friendly.

The Earth Abides Forever

Symbolically speaking there is no question: our present society—the symbolic “earth” will pass away (2 Peter 3:7). But the Scriptures clearly tell us that the planet earth will never, never be burned up. “One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the **earth abideth for ever**” (Ecclesiastes 1:4).

The Earth was prepared for Man's home—forever! In spite of people speaking of going to heaven when they die, most of earth's billions dream of living in an earthly paradise anyway. Yes, the truly consecrated Christian's hope is to live with Christ in Heaven, and to see God fact to face. But that hope is the exception to the universal desire of mankind. The Christian Church will be the Bride of Jesus Together they will give perfect life on earth to the rest of the world—their children (Rev. 22:17).

Yes, our God created the earth as man's home: “For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, **he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited....**” (Isaiah 45:18 KJV)

In fact, even though, Heaven is God's throne—Earth is His footstool. And He will make the place of His feet glorious! It will be a Paradise. “Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the **earth is my footstool....**I will make the **place of my feet glorious....**” (Isaiah 66:1; 60:13).

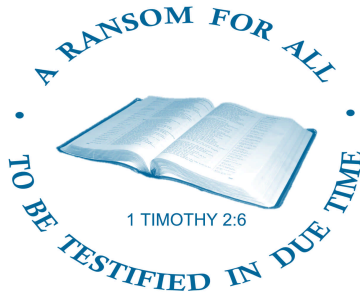
Therefore, the purpose of Jesus returning is not to save a mere few—and destroy the remainder with the Earth. The Scriptures say, the heavens retain Jesus until the “times of restitution”—restoration of mankind to their home on Earth. “That He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until **the period of restoration of all things** about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.” (Acts 3:20-22 NAS) Restoration to what Adam—and all his children—lost: Perfect life and home on a perfect earth. “For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost” (Matt 18:11).

Shoulder to Shoulder

In the “times of restoration,” humanity will be learning God's righteousness. “When thy judgments are in

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THIS ISSUE...

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the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isa 26:9). It will be a time for healing. As Revelation describes the “water of life” coming out of the throne of God and the Lamb—symbolically “leaves” will be for the “healing of the nations” (Rev. 22:1-2). After the “fire” of anarchy has destroyed the structure of the present evil society—as the Prophet Zephaniah says—God will turn to the people the pure language of Truth. The knowledge of God will cover the earth. “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the **earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD**, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9) Instead the anarchy of every man’s hand being against his brother or neighbor—people will serve God “shoulder to shoulder.”

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

SUNDAY SERVICES	Metuchen, NJ 10:00AM BIBLE STUDY The Divine Plan of the Ages 11:30AM SERMON or Topical Study of the Scriptures
WEEK-NIGHTS	Middlesex County, NJ Somerset County, NJ
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