

# Hartford Bible Students Newsletter

## April 2013

### **BOSTON MARATHON: ANOTHER TRAGEDY!**

The daily news is often so unbearable to watch that we must turn our eyes away. Why does God permit the sorrow and pain that affects the lives of good people? When will all the madness end? Is there a hope beyond all this sorrow and suffering?

The vast majority of people in the world are honest hearted and would never think of inflicting pain upon another person. And, yet, there are a few individuals with twisted minds who have been influenced by evil, and they, in some demented way, feel justified to harm the innocent by acts of terror. Yes, terrorism is an elusive foe driven by fanatical minds and fueled by hatred, misinformation and prejudice. It begs the question, "Why does a loving God permit such evil? And, what's more, if He has a plan to stop it, when will all this madness end?"

### **The Great Time of Trouble: A Prophetic Expectation**

God in His foreknowledge could look down to our time and see the hate and greed in the human heart that would escalate into the devastating worldwide violence of our day. God's Word predicted that a great increase of knowledge would be accompanied by an unprecedented "time of trouble... such as never was since there was a nation..." (Dan. 12:1) Yes, today we are living in an unparalleled time of trouble and "men's hearts [are] failing them for fear..." Luke 21:26

This unprecedented "time of trouble," is the hallmark of our time and is confirmed by the Boston Marathon bombings and so many other tragic events. True, the world has always had trouble, but prior to 1900, the potential for the annihilation of humanity by the single flick of a switch was unheard of. The possibility for devastation at the hand of man is staggering.

Many Third World nations have chemical weapons and nuclear warheads. And the threat of inventive terrorism upon random world targets looms every hour. Such volatile weaponry in the hands of unstable regimes and radical religious factions is global disaster waiting to happen.

### **Free-will: A Hard Lesson**

God desired the human race to have free-will. The planetary systems move in mechanical obedience; the animal creation is driven mainly by instinct; and God could have programmed the ideal man to never disobey, but man would be no better than a robot. God desired man to live in harmony with both his Creator and his fellow man out of sheer appreciation for the principles of righteousness. God knows it is only as man is fully motivated by the principles of righteousness that he can really gain happiness for himself and be in an attitude of concern for the happiness of

others.

God was willing to bestow free-will, fully aware that it would cost Him dearly before man became fully responsible to this freedom. The anxious parent knows the inevitability of his child touching a hot stove before learning the consequence of heat. All through life, parents will admonish their children, knowing that they will only learn certain lessons the "hard way"—by experience. Just so, God knew that man would not comprehend His warning about sin and its dire consequences. Out of love, He formulated a plan whereby man, by his own choice, might first experience the results of disobedience. Then, in God's kingdom, mankind will experience the fruitage of righteous obedience. This contrasting experience will manifest, as no other process could, the beauty and righteousness of God's law and the dreadful consequences of its violation.

God instructed Adam that if he practiced righteousness, he would live forever. If he disobeyed, then death would be a process of sorrow and suffering culminating with the grave. Note well that death, not eternal torment, is the penalty for sin. (Genesis 2:17; Psalm 146:4) Like the child not knowing the danger of heat, man did not know what suffering and death were. He disobeyed, and God is now giving him a controlled experience with evil. Thus we read, "This sore travail has God given to man to be exercised therewith." Eccl. 1:13; 3:10

Man's travail with evil is for a purpose, that he might be exercised or taught certain lessons by it. God has allowed evil for the purpose of showing the "exceeding sinfulness of sin," but there will soon come the time when He will say, "Peace, be still."

### **The Ultimate Remedy**

The process of recovery from sin is called redemption in the Bible. Redemption simply means the release from sin and death through the payment of a price.

I Timothy 2:6 speaks of Jesus' death as "a ransom for all to be testified in due time." The word "ransom" is a translation of the Greek word *antilutron* which means corresponding price. When Father Adam sinned, death passed upon him and the prospective human race. Deliverance from death required the payment of a corresponding price, the death of a perfect man.

Only the perfect man, Jesus, who was "holy, harmless, separate from sinners" could provide such a price, thereby redeeming Adam and his offspring from the penalty of death. (Heb. 7:26) Paul in Romans 5:18 says, "Therefore as by the offense of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [Jesus] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."

### **The "Residue" of Mankind**

But what of those who do not accept this payment for sin now? Christ was "a ransom for all to be testified in due time." There are two primary phases of God's redemptive plan. The first is the selection of Christ's Church which is taking place during this present evil arrangement. The test of faithfulness is refining their characters to the end that they might be able ministers of those

who were not capable of accepting Christ now. Note the words in Acts 15:14-17: "God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name [the true church]. And to this agree the words of

the prophets; as it is written, after this I will return and

will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue [remainder] of men might seek after the Lord, ..."

Note the point that a small group, "a people for His name," is selected first out of the Gentiles. During the Christian Age, the Lord is only converting a few, a "little flock" "who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, honor and immortality." (Rom. 2:7) These are elsewhere symbolically referred to as the bride of Christ. Next, the "tabernacle of David," which was an Old Testament illustration of the Kingdom of Christ, is set up again. After Christ returns, these believers will be united with him, and then will begin the conversion of "the residue of men" [the rest of mankind—NAS version].

Since the vast majority of the human race went down into their graves without hearing or understanding the "ransom for all," the Kingdom will require the raising of the dead. And this is just what Jesus tells us in John 5:28. "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good to a resurrection of life and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment." (RSV)

We have great cause to rejoice, for even though things will get worse before they get better, it is the severity and hopelessness of the world's problems that mark us at the threshold of the promised Kingdom blessings. At the end of the thousand-year Kingdom, as mankind stands at the threshold of eternity, they will look back upon this present life of suffering, sickness and sorrow. And though this experience seems dark and hopeless at present, then, by contrast with eternity, it will have been worth the education. Then, all those who perished in the terror of today will be reunited with their loved ones. Luke 21:21-32; 1Cor. 15:22

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