

Hartford Bible Students

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A Christian Living in a World of Fear

A World in Crisis

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, a 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?

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. But some may ask: Why doesn't God 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 He will replace them with His righteous Kingdom.

God will 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 being hindered by selfish and oppressive powers. Isa. 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

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. 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.

Why Do Christians have to Suffer?

But some may still wonder, 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)

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) *“...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

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.

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P.O. Box 493 * Manchester, CT 06045

E-Mail: bibletruthkeys@gmail.com