

Spring 2020 Newsletter
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A GOD WHO HIDES HIMSELF

“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You.” Job 42:5 (NKJV)

When we consider the world in which we live today we see a very different world from the one in which our grandparents and parents lived. One of the more obvious differences is the general availability of innovations in science and technology. The smart phones most people carry today are more powerful than the computers that put men on the moon in the 1960's.

We live in a world where the heavy burden of labor has been greatly reduced through the invention of all sorts of machines that can do almost any job easier and faster and cheaper. Robots make cars and robots perform delicate surgeries. Many diseases that once were an automatic death sentence are now treatable and often curable. Economically, although the world is experiencing a financial crisis and much poverty still exists, mankind, in general, lives better today than ever before.

Economic growth has resulted in an ideology war between industrialists and environmentalists regarding the relative importance of responsible environmental practices. Wildfires, rising ocean levels, tsunamis, hurricanes, cyclones and floods make news around the world, and despite the advances in medical science, disease and death continue to be a universal experience. Add to these a phenomenon of this third millennium's angry and frustrated atmosphere, the advent of non-war related mass killings. The year 2019 had 41 such massacres of the innocent, the highest incidence since 2006 when recording began.

In past ages, disasters and tragedies made people turn to God, but along with technology and prosperity comes a feeling of self-reliance. As a result, our world has become more secular and less religious. Many modern thinkers feel that with the assistance of technology man can solve most of the world's problems if given the time, education and further scientific advances. Religion is considered out of date; irrelevant in the modern world.



This condition of things was prophesied to come about by the Apostle Paul who wrote to Timothy, *“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come, for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ...without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power.”* (2 Timothy 3:1-5 New King James Version)

God's lack of intervention in traumatic world or personal affairs has led people to question His existence, or, if He exists, whether he cares about us. The natural question that erodes people's confidence in God is, “If God really does exist and if He has the power to avert these seemingly senseless things, why doesn't He? Why did he allow a gunman to randomly kill twenty-two people and injure twenty-four others at a Walmart store in El

Paso, Texas? If Jesus could calm the storm on the Sea of Galilee, (Mark 4:35-41) why doesn't God disperse the tornados that kill so many people in the US each year? Why didn't He prevent terrorists from crashing those four airplanes on 9/11 killing all those innocent people? And, when sickness and death strike close to home and we watch the suffering of someone we love; someone who never hurt anyone and perhaps was even a devoted Christian, we ask "WHY?"

After 9/11 our Religious leaders admitted they have no answers. Just trust the Lord. Isaiah 55:8, "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD*" is often cited to settle what is to them a mystery. Their inability to offer a satisfactory answer for the 21st Century has contributed heavily to the present irreligious climate and the modern leaning toward theories such as evolution to explain the cosmos without the existence of God.

Questions about God's seeming indifference are not new ones. In fact, they've troubled mankind for thousands of years. The Prophet Habakkuk cried to God, "*O LORD, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, 'Violence!' And You will not save. Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to see trouble?*" (Habakkuk 1:2,3) The Psalmist asked, "*O God, why have You cast us off forever? Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?*" (Psalm 74:1,10 NKJV)

In the book of Job, these profound questions about man's suffering are dramatized. Job was a very wealthy man who lived some three thousand or more years ago in the land of Uz. He had seven sons and three daughters, and owned vast herds of camels, oxen, donkeys and sheep. He also had many servants. He is described as the "*greatest of all men, 'blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.'*" (Job 1:3,1 NASB)

As the story goes, in one day Job's livestock were all stolen or killed and his servants slain by marauders, his children were killed when the house they were all gathered in was struck by a mighty wind and fell in upon them, and, finally, Satan caused Job to break out with painful boils all over his body. How did Job react? He was confused but the scripture says, "*Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.*" (Job 1:20-22 NASB)

We use the term "Job's Comforters," to describe persons who aggravate another's misery by misguided efforts to be of comfort.



The expression comes from Job's friends whose counsel only added to Job's bewilderment, until with his strength worn down, despondent and confused by their continual harping, Job challenged God with these words: "*I cry out to You, but You do not answer me; ... You have become cruel to me; With the strength of Your hand You oppose me.... when I looked for good, evil came to me; ... My heart is in turmoil and cannot rest.*" (Job 30:20-27 NKJV)

Job's lamentation has been echoed through the corridors of time by countless people who have likewise suffered without answers from God — good people who couldn't understand why God, who has the power to change things, was been unresponsive to their cries. The prophet Isaiah wrote, "*Truly, You are a God who hides Himself...*" (Isaiah 45:15) Why does He hide Himself? Why has God appeared indifferent to man's suffering and why doesn't He intervene when bad things happen to good people?

God's answer to Job takes from chapters 38-41, so to summarize we quote from the booklet "*And God Cried:*" (p.15)

"*God asked Job if he was present when He laid the foundation of the earth, if he understood the laws by which the tides of the sea were controlled. God asked him about the instincts and habits of the various birds and animals, and even of the great monsters of the sea. Then Job was asked if he could explain the wisdom and power represented in these marvels of creation.*

"*Essentially God said, 'Job, you don't have enough knowledge about who I am to question me about your condition. If you really knew me, you would know that there is a purpose in everything that I do. I have gone to great lengths in the creation of life. I have provided a place for life to exist. Your comforters have misled you without knowing the truth. So don't question my motives, just know that I am all powerful, I am God, Have faith in me.'*

"Just trust the Lord." Is that the only answer God has given us? The answer is "No, not today." As there is an increase of knowledge along scientific lines, we are also living in the days of the increase of knowledge along Biblical lines. To Job, and many others, the mind of God remained a mystery. They were simply told to trust Him. But the Apostle Paul wrote in the book of Ephesians: "... *So abundant was God's grace, the grace which He, the possessor of all wisdom and understanding, lavished upon us, when **He made known to us the secret of His will.** And this is in harmony with God's merciful purpose for the government of the world when the times are ripe for it — the purpose which **He has cherished in His own mind of restoring the whole creation to find its one head in Christ;** yea things in heaven and things on earth, to find their one head in him.*" (Ephesians 1:7-10 Weymouth)

Now we have the advantage of what Peter called "a more sure word of prophecy" (2 Peter 1:19) through which we can trace the development of the "secret of God's will" and see the part that the permission of evil plays in it. With the Apostolic writings, we see that God has a plan that He has been working out since before man was even created. (2 Timothy 1:9; Revelation 13:8)

God named the one tree in the Garden from which Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat, "The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil" because He knew that our first parents would eat from it and gain the knowledge of evil through their experience of sin and death. In the Garden, they had known only God's goodness and blessings. Nothing hurtful existed there and they felt no fear

or sorrow or shame. No creature menaced them, and illness and death were unknown.

They ate because, like little children, they didn't understand the ravages of sin and they had Satan whispering in their ears that God was holding something back from them. Satan told Eve that if they ate of that tree they would become like God. She believed that deception and shared the forbidden fruit with Adam. Had they said, "no we won't eat because God must have a good reason for forbidding it," our world would not have been plunged into sin. But that's not what they said. Like Job, they were without knowledge and could not imagine the terrible consequences of disobedience.

Ever since, mankind has been learning the great object lesson of the results of rebellion against God's law. What we have been experiencing for the last 6,000 years of sin, death and suffering, has been our preparation for life under God's world government. In other words, there are things that we, as a race, must learn through these experiences that will prepare us to make an informed choice for good over evil, obedience over disobedience, in God's promised Kingdom. Job learned it through his trials. He declared, "I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees you." (Job 42:5 NKJV)

People down through history have learned it. Our world of



today is learning it every time a plane falls from the sky, every time some deranged person picks up a gun and starts shooting, every time someone suffers from cancer,

every time we attend a funeral. The consequences of disobedience to God's laws are terrible and bring only suffering.

Man's lesson of evil has been thorough, but as important as this lesson has been, it would all be just a waste of time if there weren't more to it than God's just administering "tough love." It suggests that mankind cannot remain in the grave because, if we did, the lessons we learn from God's permission of evil, would have no value. It implies the necessity of a resurrection from death for all mankind. And in fact, that's exactly what the Bible teaches. Jesus said:

*"Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when **all** who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment."* (John 5:28,29 English Standard Version)

The first thing we need to see in these verses is that there are **no exceptions** to the resurrection. Jesus said **all** that are in the tombs will come forth. He makes it clear that the resurrection is for both the good and the evil. However, there is a translation issue here which needs attention. In some Bible versions, the words "damnation" or "condemnation" are used instead of

"judgment." These words give rise to different pictures in the mind. Which image did Jesus intend to convey?

There are two Greek words translated "judgment" in this verse, rendered "damnation" in the King James Bible. They are the words "*Krima*" and "*Krisis*." VINES GREEK/ENGLISH DICTIONARY contrasts the two by saying *Krisis* denotes the process of investigation, the act of distinguishing and separating as distinct from *Krima* which denotes the final sentence.

Jesus used the word "*krisis*" in John 5:29 and in verses 22 and 24, intending us to understand that as the "evil" dead are resurrected they will enter a trial period during which they will demonstrate their worthiness or unworthiness to live based not upon what they did, but upon what they do with their new life. The knowledge of sin and suffering learned in this life will equip all except the incorrigible to choose wisely and to appreciate God's laws.

Notice what else Paul said in Ephesians. He said that God has a, "*purpose which He has cherished in His own mind of restoring the whole creation.*" Not only has He allowed sin and suffering, but He has planned a time of restitution for all of creation when Satan will be bound (Rev.21:1-3) and mankind, unmolested by Satan, will be able to experience life under God's rule just as it had been in Eden. In the book of Acts, the Apostle Peter said that this coming time of restitution has been "*spoken by the mouth of **all** God's holy prophets since the world began.*" (Acts 3:21)

Ransom, Resurrection and Restitution are the three R's that form the central theme of the Bible. Restitution is the return of that which was lost. Everlasting life and the peace and perfection our first parents lost through disobedience will be restored and the earth will be a paradise that all resurrected humanity can enjoy because of the wisdom they will have gained from their experience of good and evil. (Isaiah 65:17-25)

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