

A Blessed Change – “The Former Things Are Passed Away”

During good times, the majority of people are content with their life conditions. When individuals sense inequalities or hardships, they join together to support someone or something to bring about improvements.

This latter situation is evident with the recent demands for political and economic changes. Many of the industrial countries of the world are dealing with struggling or falling financial markets. With the USA's Gross National Debt reaching the 10 trillion dollar level, one's former peace and security have vanished.

Globally, there is constant killing of lives through warfare, genocide, etc. The effects of individual actions on innocent lives are staggering. A report from the Children's Defense Fund in March 2008 cites that each day four children are killed by abuse, five youths commit suicide, and eight die by firearms.

The battle cry for "Change" has motivated many to take action. For some, it may be peace from fighting at home or abroad. For others, it may be recognition of human rights. And there are those

wanting a return of financial security lost by human greed.

A desire for change is not new. With a small beginning in the 1950's, many worked for nearly 30 years to have equal rights for all men. From 1848 to 1920, women protested and gained the right to vote.

In the 1770's the early colonists wanted a change which led to a revolution. Shortly afterward, the French people demanded a change which led to the death of their king and his court along with religious leaders. The mighty Russian empire fell to communism, which yielded to yet another form of government.

History is littered with kingdoms and regions undergoing some form of change. However, let's consider one particular and quiet change over 2000 years ago in Jerusalem.

To understand the Jews desire for change, we must step back further. In 606 BC King Zedekiah, the last son sitting on King David's throne, did more evil than his forefathers. With all the previous instructions and punishments given to Israel, many did not learn the lesson of

obedience. In God's wisdom, He executed a *change* to instill a desire in their hearts to do His Will. The LORD said, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it (the right to rule on God's Throne): and it shall be no *more*, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it *him*." Ezekiel 21:27

This declaration resulted in Israel losing its national polity. Jerusalem would be ruled by Gentile nations, the first being Babylon, followed by the Medo-Persians, Greeks, and Romans. After seventy years in captivity, King Cyrus permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. (Ezra 1:2) Yet when the older priests saw the destruction of the temple built by King Solomon, they wept for what they had lost.

Now about 600 years after the fall of Jerusalem, there were many with a true hope of a return to the days of King David and Solomon. The promised birth of their Messiah and king was expected soon. What was this hope for change based on?

"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people ... *that* from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem (the wall) unto the Messiah the Prince *shall be* seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks:..." Daniel 9:24-25

Many of the Jews and even the Persian magi understood a

prophetic day represented a year. Thus from the time of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem (454BC) to the days of the Messiah was 69 prophetic weeks or 483 years (29AD). However Daniel's prophesy referred to the Messiah, a man at the age of accountability, 30 years old. Thus subtracting 30 years from 29AD would place the birth of the Messiah about 2 BC or during the 64th week. Thus many were waiting for a sign of his presence and the fulfillment of many promises and prophecies. Some prophecies are:

- Birth Place – "Bethlehem ...come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel..." Micah 5:2
- Special birth – "...a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son...Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14
- Death of babes – "...Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not." Jeremiah 31:15
- King – "For unto us a child is born,...the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6

When the signs and announcements of "Good news of great joy" were revealed, did all rejoice with the coming change?

The Jewish shepherds acknowledged the angels' message by seeing the babe and returning home to praise God and share the good news. Simeon and Anna both prophesied concerning the future events and blessings associated with this child. (Luke 2:25-38) The three magi brought rich gifts as a token for a king.

"Blessed *are* they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." (Matt 5:4) For those of a proper heart attitude, their mourning for change was replaced with God's promised change to bring comfort and peace.

However when an individual is prideful in their position or power, they may not be willing to accept a change especially if it means losing something. The birth of the promised king to David's throne would mean an end to King Herod's rule. In addition, the birth of Jesus would mean a coming judgment of Satan. In fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy (Jeremiah 31:15), Herod ordered infants in Bethlehem to be killed. It was the angel's message for Joseph and his family to leave for Egypt which saved the life of Jesus and thwarted Satan's efforts through Herod to stop God's Planned Change.

John the Baptist about 30 years later began preparing for God's change with the proclamation "The kingdom of

heaven is at hand." The actual change commenced with Jesus' immersion at Jordan. John bore witness of the promised Messiah's presence with the words "behold the Lamb of God". John 1:36

For three and a half years (Daniel's 9:27's mid-week), Jesus taught the Jews how to change (meekness, love, purity, etc.), showed signs of kingdom blessings (healing, raising the dead), and effects of evil (pride, lying, adultery, etc.). At the end of his ministry, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on an ass' colt with its mother and "the multitudes ...cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." Matthew 21:9

Being acknowledged by those in Jerusalem as their promised king, his disciples asked Jesus about being at his right and left hand in authority. The expectation was to end the Roman rulership and to reestablish a kingdom like Solomon's.

Yet, their king needed to suffer and die. (Matthew 16:21) This requirement would not be understood until God's spirit was poured out at Pentecost. It was not God's time to end the Gentile rule of Jerusalem. "My kingdom is not of this (present evil) world...." John 18:36

Afterward, Jesus revealed the meaning of his kingship and the

better change. "...Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and **for this cause** came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." (John 18:37)
What truth?

- A better sacrifice for sins: Hebrews 10:3-10
- A better mediator between God and Man: 1 Timothy 2:5
- A better equality: Isaiah 40:3-5
- A better power to end evil: 1 Corinthians 15:24-28
- A blessed restitution of all things: Acts 3:19
- A blessed earth: Psalm 67:6 & Isaiah 65:21-25
- A blessed way for mankind: Isaiah 35

Could the things that we are seeing today be changes leading to "Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"?

The better and blessed change – "CLOSE your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks

every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay--not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realize the resurrection work complete." *The Divine Plan of the Ages* page 191, based on Revelation 21:1-4

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