

FAITH SONS OF GOD

LIBRARY
OF
ARTICLES

BRINGING HEAVEN DOWN TURNING BACK DESTRUCTION

August 30, 2013

LIBRARY
OF
ARTICLES

BRINGING HEAVEN DOWN

– Turning Back Destruction –

“This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, **your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**”*— Matthew 6:9-10*

In Jesus’ well-known discourse, the Sermon on the Mount (*Matthew 5:1-7:29*), he instructs his followers to pray for God’s will to be done on earth, in essence for the conditions in heaven to permeate the earthly realm. ‘Bringing heaven down’ so to speak, should be the prayer of everyone who honors God and especially those who truly follow Christ Jesus.

But bringing heaven down is a formidable task. There is so much turmoil in today’s world that it hardly seems possible. It is no wonder so many Christians believe the only way God’s will can be done on earth is for God to first destroy everyone and everything apathetic or in opposition to Him. They believe God has given up on man’s ability to correct his ways and has determined that the vast majority are worthy of destruction. But is that true?

Has our heavenly Father decided that destruction is the only way to achieve His will on earth? Has He determined that the good news of the kingdom Christ Jesus lived and died for will simply not have worldwide appeal after all? Has God lost the battle for souls and is throwing in the towel so He can start all over again? Has His patience run out after only 2,000 years? Is worldwide destruction really God’s will?

Or is it possible that there is another way to bring heaven down? Is there something man can do to prevent a worldwide calamity and assure that God wins the battle? We believe it is both possible and probable. We have an example of that very thing in the story of the Ninevites as told by the prophet Jonah. Whatever your personal view, we invite you to consider another possibility – another way God’s will can be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The Ninevite Possibility

The book of Jonah begins:

“The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amitai: ‘**Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.**”*— Jonah 1:1-2*

Of all the people on the earth at that time, the people of Nineveh have drawn Jehovah’s special attention. The time for her judgment has come. At first, Jonah ran away from his assignment, but is later persuaded to obey. (*Jonah 1:3-3:2*) When he gets his bearings, he heads to Nineveh to begin his ministry:

“Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. Jonah began by going a day’s journey into the city, proclaiming, “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.”*— Jonah 3:3-4*

The situation in the great city of Nineveh is similar to the way many view the entire world of our time. They believe the badness has reached a point where the only solution is a complete overthrow of the entire world system. Like Jonah, many are preaching a message of doom for our world because from their standpoint, so few really serve God. But is doom man's destiny? Notice how the people of Nineveh reacted to Jonah's preaching.

"The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth."
— Jonah 3:5

The people of Nineveh repented first. They did more than make a verbal proclamation of their error. They performed certain acts to demonstrate the sincerity of their repentance. And their actions had a domino affect.

"When Jonah's warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh: 'By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence.' — Jonah 3:6-8

The king of Nineveh witnessed the repentance of his countrymen and followed suit. But more than that, he decreed that the entire city must repent and perform acts demonstrating their repentance. Why? The king explained:

"Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish." — Jonah 3:9

Though the king had to recognize his errors, he had faith in the goodness of God. He believed if God saw their repentance, He would be moved to spare their city. And he was correct:

"When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened." — Jonah 3:10

What a wonderful outcome! True and honest repentance saved Nineveh! This example is encouraging to our generation when so many expect a complete overthrow of our world. The interpretations of Bible prophecy leads them to assume that destruction is a foregone conclusion. But, as shown by the Ninevites, that is not necessarily so. Paul wrote:

"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope." — Romans 15:4

Yes, the story of the Ninevites is comforting to those whose hope is in God. But not everyone was pleased with the salvation of Nineveh:

“But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. He prayed to the Lord, ‘Isn’t this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.”— Jonah 4:1-3

Jonah was upset. In effect, he said, ‘I knew it! I knew you wouldn’t destroy them! Why did you put me through all of this? I was minding my own business, but, no, I had to go to Nineveh to preach its destruction. And now, you don’t even destroy it? Just kill me now! Put me out of my misery!’ But God’s patience and loving kindness was available to Jonah also. After giving Jonah an object lesson on mercy (**Jonah 4:5-10**), God said:

“And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?”— Jonah 4:11

God was concerned for the sheer number of men, as well as animals, who would have been destroyed in their ignorance. His words indicate that destruction was not His purpose at all. What He wanted was repentance, a turning around and a turning away from badness. As Jonah rightly said, our God is indeed ‘gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.’

No, the destruction of Nineveh was not a foregone, foreordained conclusion. It was a warning that could have resulted in destruction, but did not. It underscores the importance and the power of our God given free will and how our free will decisions can affect God’s actions. Like Nineveh, it is possible that the destruction of our world is not a foregone conclusion either. This example demonstrates that there IS something man can do to effect a merciful response from our loving and merciful Father. Why wouldn’t God be merciful to our generation?

There are millions of faithful men and women on the earth today, and more people are seeking truth than ever before. Why would He not be patient with us when more people today are turning to the plain and open teachings of Christ and his true message of salvation?

Mercy For Our Generation

Yes, our generation has problems, but it also has tremendous potential for good. There has never been more favorable conditions for searching for God. More countries allow religious freedom, more people are recognizing the equality of all people and equality between men and women. And with the advances in technology, more people have free access to the good news.

Also, worldwide generosity is unparalleled. Whenever there is calamity around the world, people of all nations volunteer their time and resources to alleviate the suffering. These acts of brotherly love have great value in the eyes of God.

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom

prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘**Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.**’—*Matthew 25:34-40*

“Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. **And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.**”—*Matthew 10:40-42*

Yes, it is indeed possible, and probable, that God will exercise patience with our generation as long as there is forward momentum in the spread of the spiritual brotherhood on earth. And if we ‘handle the word aright’ as ambassadors substituting for Christ, not as self-proclaimed saviors or peddlers of the word, we can expect the true good news to reach its intended targets – the hearts and minds of men of all sorts.

Really, the alternative is unthinkable. The good news of the kingdom will have failed. The idea that the generous gifts from the Father are unattractive to the vast majority of His creation is appalling.

That is not to say that there will not be an overthrow of various authorities who are stifling the progress of the kingdom message. This has happened in the past and will certainly happen in the future, and, of course, many may suffer as a result. (*Daniel 5:20-21*) But a wholesale destruction of our entire system is not consistent with the character or purpose of our Father and it would be a massive defeat of the good news. Never may that happen! Therefore, all able-bodied, God-oriented persons should fix their minds on doing what we can to bring heaven down.

This perspective may not appeal to those who are determined to ‘fulfill a vision.’ (*Daniel 11:14*) Like the despondent Jonah, they fully expect worldwide destruction and will be sorely disappointed if it does not occur. But their attitude is stalling their own spiritual progress and stifling the efforts of heaven to come down. They will continue to cause us to wander generation after generation waiting for destruction instead of doing what we can to assure that God’s will be done on earth today. Unless we have faith in the power of the good news to effect real change, we will continue to be like the ancient Hebrews who wandered in the desert until the faithless generation of naysayers died off. (*Numbers 14:1-38*)

No, God is not losing the battle for souls. New sons of the kingdom are being added every day. Look around you. The news reports give a grim outlook, but in their personal

lives many can testify that people are turning to God every day. As long as the momentum is forward, why would God have a need to throw in the towel?

As Jesus demonstrated in his model prayer, we can pray for God's will to be done on earth, and then act in harmony with that prayer. We can bring heaven down by first making peace in our families – letting God's will be done in our homes. That can have a domino effect on our world, as it did in Nineveh. As peaceful families come together, they can bring heaven down in their congregations. As peaceful congregations come together, they can bring heaven down in our religions. And as peaceful religions permeate our earth, we can bring heaven down in our entire world so that God's will can be done on earth as it is in heaven!

Grand thinking? Perhaps. But with God, nothing is impossible! Remember Jesus' words:

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "**With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.**"

– *Matthew 19:23-26*

Yes, it is indeed possible to get saved in spite of the apparent difficulty. No, God does not have to resort to destruction of our world in order to save it. Our world can be saved by means of His spirit:

"So he said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: '**Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,**' says the Lord Almighty." – *Zechariah 4:6*

And no, His patience does not run out after 2,000 years – which is in reality to Him just 2 days.

"**But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.**"
– *2 Peter 3:8*

We know that most of Christianity does not share our optimism. But what harm could come to those who work diligently to spread the good news and help the world realize we are all sons of God and brothers to each other with the hope of eternal life in heaven? Would the Father strike us down? Would He be disappointed in our positive attitude? Hardly! This is the mental attitude that we are encouraged to have:

"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—**think about such things.** Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—**put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.**"
– *Philippians 4:8-9*

“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; **cling to what is good.** Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but **keep your spiritual fervor**, serving the Lord. **Be joyful in hope**, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”— **Romans 12:9-12**

Mankind has spent ample time wallowing in misery and in fearful expectation of judgment. Now is the time for change. Now is the time to let our lights shine so as to illuminate our world and move people of all sorts to give glory to God out of love, not fear. (**Matthew 5:14-16**) And as the true good news spreads and more and more sons of the Kingdom are added, perhaps we will cause any supposed anger of God to turn back as it did in the case of the Ninevites.

These are all matters for serious consideration for if there is indeed something we can do, and we do not do it, it is a sin for us. (**James 4:17**) It would be helpful if we first came to an understanding of what is exactly God’s will for us. When we understand His will, what we need to do becomes abundantly evident. That is the subject of our next article, **Bringing Heaven Down - Training Our Perceptive Powers.**

“*Elaia Luchnia*”