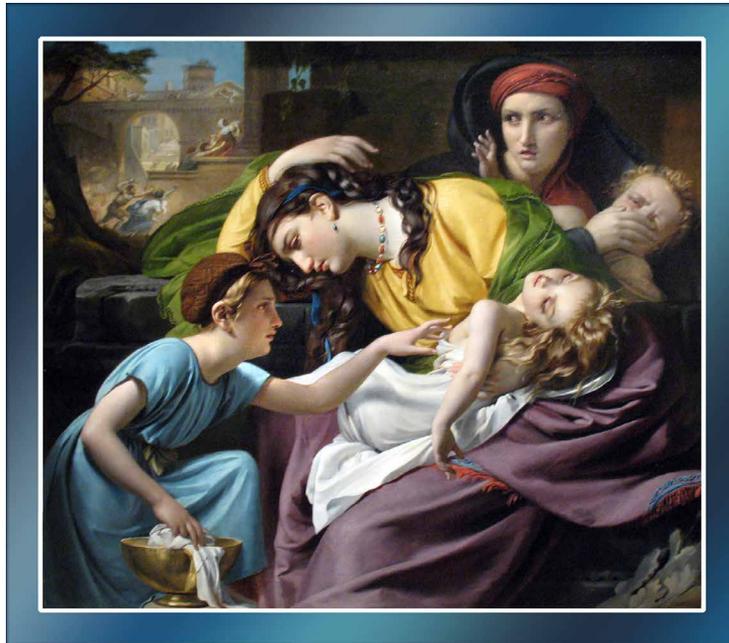


THEY SHALL COME AGAIN FROM THE LAND OF THE ENEMY

“A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears... they shall come again from the LAND OF THE ENEMY.” — Jeremiah 31:15, 16

The U.S. has witnessed over 250 mass shootings since the start of 2022. We are all sickened and frustrated by the reality of this horrible statistic — each of us sympathizing with the painful grip of tragedy and the heartbreaking sting of death, especially as it affects innocent children.

As images of violence and injustice are brought before the public eye as never before, we long for the end of suffering and sorrow. Through our tears, we call out to God: *“When will you put a stop to the killing?”*



GOD’S COMPASSIONS FAIL NOT

In our theme text, God was using Rachel, the mother of Israel, to illustrate the grieving mothers of that nation. (Jeremiah 25:8, 9; Matthew 2:16-18) Her tears figuratively portray a sorrow which is inconsolable. God was showing in this prophecy that He is not detached from the sorrow of every mother’s grieving heart: *“Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for... they shall come again from the land of the enemy [the grave].”* (Jeremiah 31:16) Oh, what a compassionate God we have! (Lamentations 3:22) God has not been indifferent to every tear and He further commissioned Jeremiah to *“Tell the people about My sorrow and say: ‘May My eyes flow with tears day and night... for My people are deeply wounded... I see the bodies of men killed in war; when I go into the towns, I see people starving to death.’”* Jeremiah 14:17, 18 GNB

Yes, God feels our sorrow, and as the Apostle Paul states, God *“comforteth those that are cast down.”* King David wrote: *“He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.”* (2 Corinthians 7:6; Psalms 147:3) But, in times of sorrow, it takes extreme faith to believe these words; yet God

promised there will ultimately be a beautiful end to all of the tragedies that we see in the news today. God’s wisdom has planned for the eternal welfare of all, and His Divine love and power **will** attain that end. In the near future, all those who have perished in the sorrowful events of today — young and old — **will** come forth from their graves to live again in His peaceable Kingdom!

ALL SHALL ESCAPE FROM DEATH

To reinforce our faith, we as Christians must continue to remind ourselves of these promises, that God has not abandoned the world in a

hopeless condition. Zechariah 9:12 declares that the dead are *“prisoners of hope,”* and, thus, death will **not** be the final condition of earth’s suffering millions. Because God realizes the enormity of human suffering, from a time *“before the foundation of the world,”* He planned for the *resurrection* and then the *recovery* of all humanity. 1 Peter 1:19, 20

Paul calls this *rescue plan* *“a ransom for all to be testified in due time.”* (1 Timothy 2:3-6) This *ransom* is the basis of the only true hope for a world in despair. The *penalty of death* that Adam brought upon all his progeny will be offset by the *price paid* for Adam’s disobedience when Christ laid down his life in death. This wonderful provision of the *ransom* will be a fresh opportunity to all who have ever lived to come out from under the Adamic curse of death. *“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”* (1 Corinthians 15:21, 22) The *ransom* will not only provide for the return of all from the grave, but to a joyful reunion of loved ones, the opportunity to learn of

the one true God, and to live forever in health and happiness upon a perfect earth. *“I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.”* Hosea 13:14

All of those who died in the tragedies of mass shootings — and countless other disasters throughout man’s history — will have the privilege of learning of the *only name* whereby they might be saved. (Acts 4:12) This will be a time of education to unlearn the errors of the past and to learn what God’s truth and His righteous principles really are.

One very important truth that has been lost sight of is that the resurrection of the dead will come in two phases — first to Christians who “believe” now, and later to “all the families of the earth.” Those not Christian now will be given an opportunity to “believe in him” under more favorable circumstances in God’s Kingdom on earth. *“...we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.”* (1 Timothy 4:10) Jesus confirmed this oath: *“Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to*

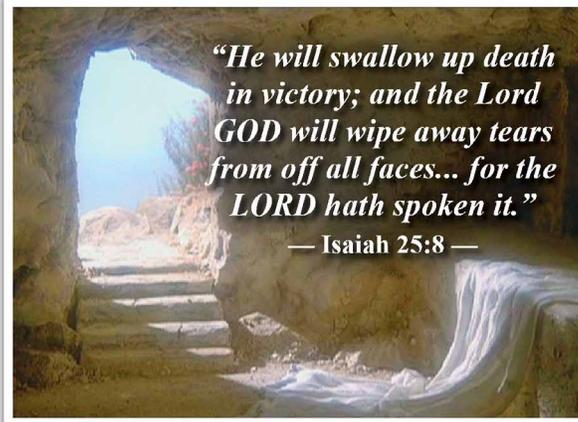
a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.” (John 5:28, 29 NAS) Jesus’ words clarify these two phases upon two groups who will come forth from the grave. Again, the first are those who have proven faithful to trials, disciplines and testings during this *present evil world*, and who have passed their trials successfully — these are worthy to be rewarded with perfect life in heaven. The second group is comprised of the remainder of mankind who have not accepted salvation through Christ as yet because of various unfavorable circumstances in their lives in this *present evil world*.

God intends to use the cursed conditions of this present world as an opportunity to demonstrate to mankind the extreme consequence of living in a world under Satan’s influence, and to encourage them to turn from sin and unbelief and to put their trust in their all-wise Creator. Though God’s plans are misunderstood now, soon His merciful character and government will be vindicated. Then all will begin to see that it was not God who *caused* the evil, but that he *permitted* it for a relatively short period of time to teach valuable, everlasting lessons: *“It is a difficult exercise which God has imposed upon the sons of Adam to develop themselves by it.”* Ecclesiastes 1:13—Fenton Translation

By comparison to this nighttime of sorrow, the Apostle John describes this time yet future, free of every evil: *“And I saw a new heaven [spiritual rule] and a new earth [new social order upon earth under a benevolent heavenly government]: for the first heaven [corrupt spiritual systems] and the first earth [society oppressed under the leadership of Satan] were passed away.... And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem [Christ’s Church], coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will*

dwell with them, and they shall be His people.... And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” Revelation 21:1-4

This will be a glorious opportunity for every man, woman and child to be released from their graves and to be taught by Christ and his Church. Once released and taught, they will begin to grow to mental, moral and physical perfection. But note, this does not mean universal salvation — everlasting life regardless of obedience — for the Scriptures declare that those who refuse to profit by these glorious opportunities granted them shall be destroyed from amongst the people in the *second death* — *“They shall be as though they had not been.”* (Obadiah 1:16; Acts 3:19-23; Revelation 20:14) We believe, however, that the vast majority “shall return [from their graves], and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads....” (Isaiah 35:10) Then, God *“...will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us... we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.”* Isaiah 25:7-9



we have waited for him, and he will save us... we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.” Isaiah 25:7-9

ROOT CAUSES OF SOUL SICKNESS

Simply put, human selfishness is at the root of much of the sorrow brought about by deadly criminal acts. This is compounded by over six thousand years of inherited sin and weakness since Adam and Eve first disobeyed God. Yes, the consequence of Satan’s first lie — *“Ye shall not surely die”* — was the beginning of sorrows.

The most disturbing cause of soul sickness is the *influence* of Satan and his demon host upon the more prideful and selfish of mankind—religious rulers, financial giants, government autocrats, and the covetous and rebellious throughout society. Powerful wicked spirits find these individuals an easy prey, enticing the proud and self-seeking to disregard the lives and interests of others.

While fallen man is much to blame for the acts of violence, *“wicked spirits”* also seek to influence the thoughts and actions of the criminally insane, suggesting hideous acts of violence. Add into this alcohol and other drugs, and the result is a total lack of compassion for the innocent. The Scriptures describe in detail such incidents and the misery caused by evil spirit influence. Ephesians 6:12; Matthew 8:16; Mark 5:15; Luke 4:41; Luke 22:3

WHEN WILL SORROW END?

The time is coming when the lives of Satan and all evil beings will be *extinguished forever* — never to hurt nor deceive the world again. (Revelation 20:2, 3, 10) Then, the love of God will abundantly bestow blessings of life, peace and happiness upon all. Yes, God assures us that most all of *“the inhabitants of the earth will learn righteousness”* when the *“knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the deep.”* (Isaiah 26:9; 11:9)

The influence of God's benevolent Kingdom will have a vastly opposite effect to that of Satan's influence. Truth and righteousness will have a positive, transformative impact on the hearts of humanity. "...and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." Ezekiel 11:19-20

It is the severity and hopelessness of the world's problems that mark us at the threshold of these promised Kingdom blessings. Just as the tragic events of today were prophesied, so is the profound hope that "*The desire of all nations shall come.*" (Haggai 2:7) But first, just like their Master, Jesus' followers must learn obedience by the things which they suffer — proving worthy to receive glory and honor in heaven. (Hebrews 5:8-10) Their faith must be tested and their characters developed, for they are being prepared to reign with Christ in his Kingdom. From heaven, they will dispense blessings to the *poor groaning creation* on earth — teaching righteousness and bringing healing to a world which has been oppressed by sin. See 1 Peter 1:7; Roman 8:14-17; Revelation 2:10; 2 Timothy 2:12.

SORROW'S EVERLASTING LESSON

Our faith can be strengthened knowing that God has a loving reason for everything He has permitted — the exceeding sorrows of a world left on its own under the present ruler of darkness, Satan. But, when God finally says, "*It is enough!*" we can rest assured that there will be great changes in the earth. Then, when God provides, through His Son, the long awaited worldwide *peace*, all will begin to see that the permission of evil was both educational and preparatory to the leading of mankind into the ages of blessings to come, wherein "*all the families of the earth will be blessed.*" Genesis 28:14-18

Once God, through His Son, puts an utter end to all evil, "*affliction shall not rise up the second time.*" (Nahum 1:9) These harsh lessons of evil will never again be necessary. All the families of the earth will learn that love, peace, righteousness and selflessness are far more preferable than the life they once had during this *present evil world*. The depth of God's wisdom is shown in His foresight to devise this plan which provides for man's free-will and experience with evil, but nevertheless brings redemption through Christ which will result in future eternal happiness. We thank God that death, the penalty for sin, is not the irrevocable end of human existence; but rather, *it is the final experience of an everlasting lesson.*

PRECIOUS PROMISES WHICH KEEP HOPE ALIVE

Christians should be comforted that the same Bible which prophesied that in the *end times* every man's hand shall be against his neighbor, also foretells of a future time of world peace and harmony. Following are just a few of the hundreds of blessings promised by God's Kingdom to come, when His will shall be done on Earth as it is being done in heaven. Matthew 6:10



No more wicked acts and senseless killing: "*No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast...*" "*And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie...*" Psalm 37:10; Isaiah 26:9; 35:8,9; 55:7; Revelation 20:2, 3; 21:27

No more natural disasters: "*They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain...*" Isaiah 11:9; Isaiah 55:12

No more works of Satan: "*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*" "*...through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.*" 1 John 3:8; Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 20:2, 3, 10, 14

No more lies, ignorance or superstition: "*Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.*" Isaiah 28:17; Zephaniah 3:9; Psalm 85:11

No more homelessness or starvation: "*They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit. They shall not plant and another eat.*" Isaiah. 65:21-23; Micah 4:4; Isaiah 32:18; Psalm 67:6; 85:12; Isaiah 51:3

No more sickness: "*And no inhabitant will say I am sick.*" "*Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing...*"

Isaiah 33:24; Isaiah 35:5, 6

No more wars: "*They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation neither shall they learn war anymore.*" Micah 4:3; Isaiah 2:4; Psalm 46:9; Zephaniah 3:8-9; Haggai 2:7

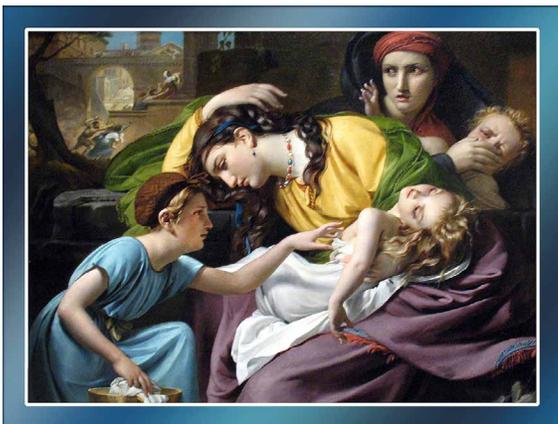
No more sorrow: "*...good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*" "*...they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*" Luke 2:10; Isaiah 35:5, 10; Isaiah 33:24; Ezekiel 34:26

No more oppression or injustice of any kind: "*He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.*" Psalm 72:4; Isaiah 26:9; 28:17; Jeremiah 31:33, 34

No more fear: "*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.*" Isaiah 11:6; Isaiah 25:8; Isaiah 35:9, 10

No more tears: "*GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces.*" Isaiah 25:8; Revelation 7:17; 21:4, 5

No more dying: "*Death where is thy sting? grave where is thy victory?*" "*...and there shall be no more death...*" "*He will swallow up death in victory...*" "*I will redeem them from death... O grave, I will be thy destruction.*" 1 Corinthians 15:55; Isaiah 25:8; 1 Timothy 2:3-6; Revelation 21:4; Hosea 13:14



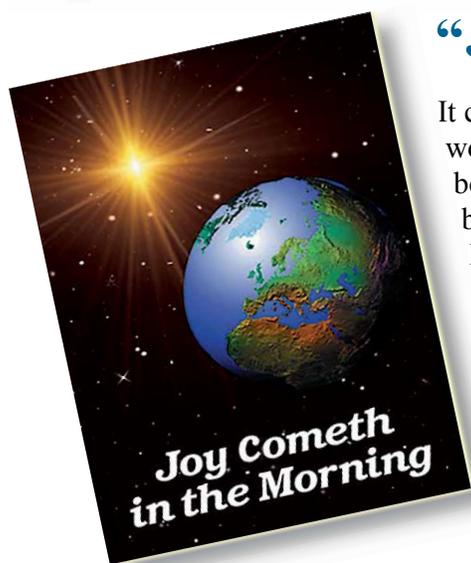
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