

~ Does God Care? ~

Heartaches Came August 13th

The tragedy on the evening of August 13, 2011 at the Indiana State Fair touched many families. Seven lives ended and many more were injured as the result of a summer storm blowing down part of a temporary stage cover. Immediately many in the crowd and the fair officials responded by rushing to the aid of the victims. Their actions demonstrate the natural human desire to provide care for those injured.

As the hours and days pass, some may wonder – Does God Care? Why did He take my loved one? Why did He permit such injury and pain? And as close and real as this recent tragedy was, Americans remember the tragedies of September 11, 2001. The greater question is why has the heartache of death continued for over 6000 years from the blood of Able to today?

The answers are YES – God does care and He does notice our tragedies. And God has a plan and YOU are in it.

God Remembers Our Tears

Like the prayers that were cried to God when Israel was afflicted in Egypt, God did hear their prayers and sent them a deliverer. "And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians...." Exodus 3:7, 8

While in Egypt, Israel's bondage was a picture of mankind being held captive to the taskmasters, sin and death. And as Israel was waiting for a deliverer, mankind has been waiting for God's promised savior.

Truly death has been man's greatest enemy. (1 Cor. 15:26) The power of death cannot be halted with one's own strength or wealth. "Truly no man can ransom

himself, or give to God the price of his life, for the ransom of his life is costly, and can never suffice,..." Psalms 49:7, 8

On that frightful night, many tears were shed because nothing could be done to turn back time and prevent the pain and death. And as the people of the world began to hear the reports and saw the events unfolding their hearts wept.

Our tears are no different than what the world has expressed for generations. Death has touched both the weak and the strong. It has humbled even the proud. We can recount the story of Lazarus and the tears of his sisters Mary and Martha. And when Jesus approached the tomb of Lazarus, whom he loved, we are told that Jesus wept. Some of the Jews saw Jesus' tears and said "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" John 11:35-37

Jesus also Wept

Why did Jesus weep? Was it because he could not raise Lazarus? No! We read how Jesus prayed to his heavenly Father and then Jesus called out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." And Lazarus, dead for four days, was restored to the same life condition he had before his illness.

God cared so much for the sinful world that He gave His only begotten son to be a ransom for mankind. (John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:6) Jesus, as a perfect man and the son of God, wept because he felt the heartache, grief, and pain of fallen mankind. And because he personally witnessed the effects of sin and death, Jesus saw how helpless man was and how a savior was needed. Jesus cared so much for the fallen human race that he said "I delight to do thy will" and complied with God's plan to be the Lamb of God, the ransoming sacrifice for Adam and his children.

Why God's Delay?

If God really hears our cries and truly cares, why has death continued to reign for nearly 2000 years since Christ's ransoming sacrifice on the cross? There are two parts in the answer of this question. First, let's look at the promise made to Abraham. "...Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation,..."(Genesis 12:1, 2) Yet Abraham had only one son by Sarah, the promised one, Isaac. Isaac had only two sons, Esau and Jacob. Two hundred and fifteen years after God's promise to Abraham, when Jacob joined Joseph in Egypt, there were 70 males. Gen. 46:27

Seventy males do not necessarily make a great nation. Yet, is God ever short with His promises? It was 430 years to the day after God's promise, that we find Moses leading six hundred thousand Hebrew males along with their wives and children out of Egypt. (Exodus 12:37-41) Abraham's family was a great nation. And one day God will fulfill another promise when the descendants of Abraham will bless all the nations of the earth. Genesis 22:15-18.

This length of time to build a great nation is a beautiful picture of God's word to Adam. "And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth...'" (Genesis 1:28) In Noah's day when God saw the corruption which came upon the human race due to the involvement of the fallen angels, He sent a flood to destroy all mankind and land and air animals. Except Noah and his family were not corrupted and they trusted in God and strove to live righteously. Thus God's plan was to save Noah, his sons and their wives along with a number of animals in an ark. Afterwards God gave a sign, a rainbow, that He would not destroy the earth again. Also God told Noah and his sons "...Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth." Genesis 9:1

Nearly 7000 years after God's instructions to Adam and later to Noah, there are about 7 billion people living on this earth. In addition, there are estimates of between 70 to 110 billion descendants of Adam and Eve who are in the grave. Many of those living today are waiting for a savior and they are held in bondage of sin and death similar to their fathers. Sadly many more, due to the effects of the bondage, have given up on any hope due to a perceived delay.

The second part of the answer to the question of "delay" is provided by Apostle Paul in Romans 8:18-25. "18...For the creation (world of mankind) waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God (Christ, head and body – Colossians 1:18); ... 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; 23 and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit..."

Church's Development

Similar to Moses' 40 humbling years of experience of tending sheep for Jethro, Christ's body members for nearly 2000 years are humbly being Christ-like developed and proven to be of those first fruits. (Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 15:23; Revelation 14:4) Apostle Paul said, "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12:1) They need to "... complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church," (Colossians 1:24). They are to "...not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake," (Philippians 1:29). If they do so, then they will be "... those with him (who) are called and chosen and faithful." (Revelation 17:14) The delay of the church's completion is until the full number of those called and proven worthy have come into the body. (Romans 11:25) Then Christ, head and body, will be

mankind's Moses to lead the world to the promised new heavens and new earth. Revelation 21:1

If there are first fruits, then there must be later fruits similar to the first and best harvest of a tree or vine which is followed by harvesting later fruitage throughout the season. Yet many Christians believe that now is the time to be saved. They conclude that those who do not accept Jesus now are LOST. And if lost, then the question is what happens to the "all"? What does the Bible say about these "lost"?

All Are Counted

Apostle Paul tells us "since **ALL** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) Furthermore he explains in Romans 5:12, "Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to **ALL** men because **ALL** men sinned." The **ALL**, Adam and **ALL** his children, are lost to sin. All need a savior.

Is Jehovah the God of only those living today who have accepted Jesus? Is He not also the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob as well as some 45 billion who died before Christ's sacrifice? And since the cross, only a few of the 25 to 65 billion ever knew and accepted Jesus as their personal savior. Leaving those not accepting Jesus truly lost? Again their conclusion is that only a few are saved and all others before and after the cross are lost.

We are told in Romans 14:9 "For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead (**ALL** those in the grave) and of the living (**ALL** those alive today)."

ALL of Adam's children will be remembered. "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when **ALL** who are in the tombs will hear his voice." John 5:28

"who (God) desires **ALL** men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:4) Some know now and others will know later.

"who (Jesus) gave himself as a ransom for **ALL**, the testimony to which was borne at the proper time. (1 Timothy 2:6) A time now is for the church and a time later will be for the world and the dead.

"For as in Adam **ALL** die, so also in Christ shall **ALL** be made alive." 1 Corinthians 15:22

Jesus' message was only to the house of Israel during his 3 ½ years of ministry. Furthermore the apostles continued to take the Gospel only to the Jews for 3 ½ years more to complete Daniel's 70th week. (Daniel 9:24-27). Then afterwards, God permitted the Gospel message to go to the Gentiles with Cornelius and his family to be the first grafted into the vine. (Romans 11:13-24) All of these believers, Jews and Gentiles, were identified by Jesus as his flock. (John 10:7-15) This is the first part of the ALL.

The Other Sheep

Jesus addresses the remaining world of mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, both alive and dead, as "other sheep" to be the greater portion of the ALL. "And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd." (John 10:16) ALL!

When will the other sheep be brought in? In God's plan for the remaining children of Adam and Adam himself, the time will be with Jesus' second parousia or presence.

A Future Time of Blessing

"And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing;..." (Isaiah 51:11) Future!

"And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not pass over it, and fools shall not err therein." (Isaiah 35:8) Future!

"...I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts;...they shall be my people." (Jeremiah 31:33) Future!

"and many nations shall come, and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." (Micah 4:2) Future!

The last step will be "Then Death (the Adamic death sentence) and Hades (grave) were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire (picturing total destruction)". Revelation 20:14 (RSV)

Thankfully we have a caring God.

Close Your Eyes

"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." Volume 1 of *Studies in the Scriptures*, page 191 & 192

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