

August 20, 2021

Dear Members and Friends,

It is only a few weeks now until the Feast of Trumpets occurs, which will be followed by the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. We can certainly look forward especially to this Feast of Trumpets because of what we read in Revelation 11:15. This pictures the culmination of the blowing of the seven trumpets after the Great Tribulation and the Day of the LORD: "Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our LORD and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'"

To us, this is a wonderful day to look forward to. It pictures what is described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: "For the LORD Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the LORD in the air. And thus we shall always be with the LORD." This is the time of the beginning of our eternal life—a time of great rejoicing when we will meet up with all of those we have known in God's Church who have endured to the end. We will also meet up with many others, including prophets and members of God's Church throughout the ages.

However, the Feast of Trumpets does not only have importance *for us*—not just for those called by God. But it points at the time when the whole world will begin to be changed. Today, this world is ruled by Satan who is called the god of this age and who has blinded the minds of almost every person (2 Corinthians 4:4). We have just published a new free booklet, titled, "*Evil Empires and Evil People—Wild Beasts of the Bible.*" In this booklet, we show many biblical references of wild beasts that are used to depict evil people and evil empires in this world. This booklet explains these symbolic references as they apply to dramatic prophecies given for our time.

The world today is in many ways very insecure and at times quite frightening. As is mentioned in the prophecy that Christ delivered on the Mount of Olives, there would be religious deception and earthquakes, as well as wars and rumors of wars.

When we look up historical reports, there are listings of many wars over the centuries. And as for rumors of wars, in magazines of the 1960s, there were many articles on building fallout shelters in case there was a nuclear war between the Soviet Union and the USA. Even today, there are suggestions or rumors of a war between China and USA. In the real wars, multiple tens of millions of people have been killed, both in the military and also innocent civilians.

But when the events, symbolized by the Feast of Trumpets, are being fulfilled, when Christ returns to earth as Lord of lords and King of kings, He will overcome everyone who tries to fight against Him (Revelation 17:14). There will be a world of peace for a thousand years, beginning in Jerusalem. Zechariah 14:3-4 also describes this time period when the nations are gathered together to fight against Jerusalem: "Then the LORD will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east...."

However, Jesus Christ did not only prophesy about religious deception, earthquakes and wars when He spoke on the Mount of Olives. He also spoke about famines and pestilences. Again, when we

look through history, there are many records of pestilences over the centuries. Some notable ones that come to mind are the black death or bubonic plague in the fourteenth century, which killed over seventy-five million people. There have also been repeated episodes of this plague since then, although not killing as many. In 1918, at the end of the Great War (World War I), a severe influenza killed around fifty million people, mostly young adults. This was explained with wartime conditions which caused famine and other diseases like consumption (tuberculosis) to be combined with this flu to make it more deadly. Deuteronomy 28:22 describes this for Israelites who do not obey God, although it would apply to others as well. Even today, we are suffering through a pestilence called Covid19, which is reported so far to have killed over four million people (even though it must be admitted that those figures are highly inflated. Further, many suffer more from governmental restrictions imposed on the people than from the disease itself.)

But after the fulfillment of the events, pictured by the Feast of Trumpets, these conditions will be ended for a thousand years. Some verses in Isaiah 33 show us examples of this wonderful time. Verse 20 says: "Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts..." This includes the Feasts, which we will be observing in the next few weeks. Verse 20 continues: "Your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet home..." Certainly, Jerusalem is not like this today. Continuing: "A tabernacle that will not be taken down..." Verse 21 reads: "But there the majestic LORD will be for us A place of broad rivers and streams, In which no galley with oars will sail, Nor majestic ships pass by." This implies that no ships of war will be around, again starting at Jerusalem and then spreading to the rest of the world. Verse 24 is also inspiring: "And the inhabitant will not say 'I am sick'; The people who dwell in it will be forgiven their iniquity." Again, after Christ has returned, there will be abundant health. As we read in Ezekiel 47:12, if medicine is needed, the trees beside the river will have leaves for medicine.

As we live in this world which is not God's world, we are told to pray for God's Kingdom to come and His will to be done "on earth as in heaven" (Matthew 6:10; Revised English Bible). We are also told to seek first the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33). And what is God's own attitude in this? Isaiah chapter 62 makes this very clear. Verse 1 informs us that God will not hold His peace or rest until the righteousness of Jerusalem goes forth as brightness. Verses 6 and 7 inform us that God has set up watchers who will never hold their peace day or night until He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth. So, as well as telling us to desire His Kingdom to be established on the earth, He also greatly desires it.

As these soon-coming Feast days approach, we should be reminded that they signify our change to immortal Spirit beings, but also the time when this world will no longer be ruled by Satan. It will be a time when God's Kingdom of truth and righteousness, peace and health, will be established. It will begin at Jerusalem and ultimately cover the whole earth.

With much love and concern,

Your brother in Christ's service,



Paul Niehoff (Australia)