

God's Answers For Today

All men desire peace, and most of them share the conviction that war would mean irreparable ruin, yet somehow they seem to be at the mercy of forces over which they have no control. The trouble is that they want peace on their own particular terms, and the very gravity of the world situation tends to make them more insistent in their demands.

We turn from the gloomy anticipations of men to God's Word. "The way of an is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps." Jeremiah 10:23. From this one statement alone it is dear that unless men look to God for guidance and help, civilization as we now know it will fail. It cannot do otherwise if men fail to walk in God's way and to seek wisdom from Him. Now as never before is being fulfilled the ancient declaration: "The wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." Isaiah 29:14.

Such is the topsy-turvy world we live in that godly wisdom is regarded as foolishness. The very thing that could bring healing to humanity's putrefying sores is generally regarded as unworkable and undesirable. More and more are men inclined to "call evil good, and good evil." They "put darkness for light, and light for darkness." Isaiah 5:20. Jesus Christ alone has the solution to earth's troubles, but the general picture is one of increasing reluctance to come to Him. Christ's sorrowful complaint still is: "You will not come to Me, that You might have life." John 5:40. Therefore He thus describes the picture of this old world's last days: "Men swooning with panic and foreboding of what is to befall the universe." Luke 21:26 (Moffatt).

Of course, the optimistic and heroic-planners are hard at work. The basic trouble, however, is not with the plans but with men and women. For plans depend on men rather than men on plans. An engineer's plans may be flawless, but if his bridge is built of rotten timber instead of sturdy steel, the bridge will collapse. Men are like that rotten timber. The best of plans is doomed to fail unless the human material is perfected.

Now only God can change the human heart. Only He can transform the rotten timber to stainless steel. We cannot perfect ourselves no matter how diligently we try. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may You also do good that are accustomed to do evil." Jeremiah 13:23. Actually the global picture does not suggest any widespread attempt on man's part at moral improvement. Hence we come again to the Bible's portrayal of the last days, which visualizes a condition where - evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." 2 Timothy 3:13. "In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, without natural affection, trace breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, traitors, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." 2 Timothy 3:14.

Finally we have the Lord's declaration: "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away. So shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matthew 24:37-39. That antediluvian civilization of Noah's day failed to survive because of their refusal to turn to God. In like manner, says Jesus, will our last day civilization fail to survive. The Lord Himself draws the striking parallel.

Happily, however, God's picture is not one of unmitigated gloom. His prophetic Word envisions the most glorious prospects for those who, like Noah and his family, turn with all their hearts to the Lord. Through all the troubles of the last days, we are assured that "the Lord will be the hope of His people." Joel 3:16.

Will the Nations Ever Unite?

GOD'S answer to this question was given 2,500 years ago through Daniel the prophet. Speaking of the nations of today, Daniel was inspired to declare: "They shall not cleave one to another!" Daniel 2:43. Against this prophetic word of the Lord, kings, presidents, dictators, and political leaders have striven in vain. Such men as Charlemagne, Charles V of Spain, Louis XIV-the "Grand Monarque" of France, and Napoleon Bonaparte, all sought to restore the European unity that was Rome's. In defining the aim of his Imperial policy, Napoleon said: "I must have a European code, a European Court of Cassation, a common coinage, common weights and measures, and common laws. I have to make of all the peoples of Europe one single people, and of Paris the capital of the world." (Quoted in From Napoleon to Stalin, page 27) This great general's plans failed. Bible prophecy had thus decreed it.

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Perhaps the Bible's most striking prophecy is that recorded in Daniel chapter two, for it covers in its broad sweep the whole of political history to the end of time. King Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BC), Babylon's greatest monarch, had a dream. In his dream he saw a great image whose head was of gold, his breast of silver, his loins of brass, his legs of iron, and his feet of iron and clay mixed. (Daniel 2:31-33.) Daniel the prophet, after much prayer, explained the meaning of the dream to the king. (Daniel 2:36-40.) He told the king that it was a revelation from God, who was thus revealing what shall be in the latter days! Daniel 2:28.

The golden head was a symbol of the Babylonian empire, which dominated the world at that time. Nebuchadnezzar fondly hoped that his kingdom would continue forever as the world's dominant power, but Daniel said this was not to be.

The breast and arms of silver represented the second world empire, that of MedoPersia. Under Cyrus, the great city of Babylon fell in 538 BC, and Babylonian power completely collapsed, never to rise again. As silver is inferior to gold, so was the magnificence of Persia inferior to that of her predecessor. Her military power, however, was stronger.

But, said Daniel, the world would not forever be dominated by Persia. The image's loins of brass symbolized a third world power. This power was Greece. Led by Alexander the Great the Greek army overthrew Darius and his Persians at the battle of Arbela in 331 BC; Greece had a meteoric rise to power; but like the powers before her, Greece was to be superseded.

The image's legs of iron were symbolic of the fourth world empire-the iron monarchy of Rome. Power passed from Greece to Rome at the battle of Pydna in Macedonia, 168 BC. Said Daniel: "The fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and subdues all things." Verse 40. History proved it to be even so. For centuries, no power could resist Rome. It broke in pieces the Greek empire, and well nigh destroyed the Jewish nation (AD 70).

After Rome, the next phase, according to the prophet was not the rise of a fifth world monarchy, which would be the normal thing to expect, but division. This was symbolized by the image's feet and toes, part of potter's clay, and part of iron." Verse 41. Rome's power was sapped by moral decline, and under the impact of the barbarian invasions of the fourth and fifth centuries, the mighty empire faded out. In her place rose ten independent nations, portrayed also by the ten horns of the fourth beast in Daniel 7:7, 24. These were the Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, Alamanni, Lombards, Heruli, Burgundians, Suevi, Vandals, and Anglo Saxons.

This condition of disunity was represented by the iron and clay of the image's feet, and just as these two materials will not cohere, so the disunited nations shall not cleave one to another." Verse 43. Thus did God, through His prophet, foresee it and describe it, and the prophetic word has never been broken. As the Oxford historian, A. J. P. Taylor, remarks: "How has the continent of Europe escaped political unification? Everything in Europe seems to call for it; everything, that is, except the temperament and traditions of its peoples." (From Napoleon to Stalin, page 24) Whatever the reason, Bible prophecy foresaw that unity would never again be achieved by man. "For a thousand years men have dreamed of European union; yet for a thousand years this most uniform of continents has defied political unification. The most recent attempt at it [Hitler's] we have just lived through and successfully opposed."-Ibid., page 24.

Any future attempts will just as surely fail, until that mighty event takes place which concludes the remarkable prediction of Daniel chapter two. This event is of global importance. It will be by far the most stupendous happening of the ages, completely dwarfing all else which world history records. But we will consider this a little later.

In view of such prophecies as we have here briefly surveyed, no doubts regarding the Bible's divine origin can be reasonably retained. In his response to it all King Nebuchadnezzar was constrained to say: "Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets." Daniel 2:47. Wise are we if we place our full trust and confidence in Him.

Does God Control the Nations?

THIS divine "revealer of secrets" is in full control over the nations of this world. In days like these, no fact is more reassuring than that the great God of heaven is overruling in human affairs. At no time has God withdrawn His influence from men. None, not even the darkest heathen or the most hardened atheist, is immune from God's sovereign power.