

GOD, on the JOB

By

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The agony of our age is reflected in the pessimism of those who ask, “If there is a God, why does He allow war, disease, poverty and crime?” What suffering man wants to know is, “If there is God, why doesn’t He **DO SOMETHING?**”

This pessimism is reflected sharply in the literature and music of our generation. The novelist and the playwright dwell on the theme of hopelessness and helplessness, the “man in a trap” idea. Eventually this pessimism sifts down through magazine, newspaper and TV until it begins to make its mark on the average person who may never have read after these writers.

The youth are being conditioned to pessimism as demonstrated in the so-called “teenage” music. Consider the recent song, “Eve of Destruction.”

“If the button is pushed, there’s no running away,
There’ll be no one to save
With the world in a grave;
Oh, you don’t believe
We’re on the eve of destruction.”

So-called theologians keep pessimism in the limelight by their assertion that “God is dead,” that there must be a new religion to take the place of the one that has failed, thus indicating that there is no revealed religion. Of course when man invents his own religion his situation is hopeless indeed, for without truth revealed from God, he has no assurance of life after death, nor any Purpose for this life! The mist of pessimism has enveloped the world so that at the moment when a person is desperately in need of assurance, direction and purpose, he is filled with doubt, confusion and meaningless activity.

This pessimism and rebellion against God is in reality a proof that GOD IS, and that His word is true. For in the Bible God has described that such a thing would happen. Besides that, it isn’t the first time it has happened. Moreover, the reason for it is fully described in Scripture.

Once before, in the days of Noah, man refused to believe God. His rejection of God was so complete that it was said of him that “his thoughts were only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). After Noah had spent years of preaching and warning the people, they still refused to turn from their rebellion and God finally destroyed them. Only Noah and his family – eight in all – were spared.

The Scriptures tell us that the time would come when men would turn from truth to speculation and fables. In the end, Jesus said, there would be very few who would

believe. In fact, Peter tells us that in the last day man will even insist that there is to be no end, saying “things continue as they were...” (2 Peter 3:3-4).

Therefore the very pessimism of our day, the great number of leaders and teachers of religion who are rejecting God and His revealed word, is a fulfillment of that very word, and proof of its truth.

FREEDOM IS NOT NEGLECT

The fact that things are not going so well in the world causes many to think God has either deserted it, or doesn't care. This idea comes about because people think that if God created the world, He is responsible for it, and ought to do something about it. He ought to stop all wars, or cure all sickness. God does do a great deal of this, far more than most of us ever know. He doesn't shirk responsibility. But part of that responsibility is to give man his freedom, freedom to be man, to make choices, to rebel against the Creator if he wants to. God created men with minds, and intends for them to use those minds.

The very minute God steps in and starts pushing people around in order to stop crime and war, and even disease which often is the result of man's rebellion; when He takes over man, He destroys the very thing He created: man with a mind to choose and act as he pleases.

Therefore the deterioration of civilization is not evidence that God is dead, but is rather the very thing God said would happen when men sin and refuse to obey Him.

IS IT FAIR?

But what of the believers who are victims of the evil in the world? Is it fair that they suffer because of the rebellion of the rest? As far as man is concerned, it isn't fair. Men who have rejected the purpose of God are not concerned with being fair or good to each other. But man's unfairness does not intimidate God. He makes the sun to shine on the good and the bad; the rain falls on the just and the unjust. He gives life and breath to all. “Let no man say when he is tempted ‘I am tempted of God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil and He Himself tempted no man: but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, bears sin: and the sin when it is full grown brings forth death” (James 1:13-15).

God promises that “in the world you shall have tribulation.” (John 16:33) Jesus pointed out that if the world hated Him, it certainly would hate those who follow him. (John 15:18-20) It isn't fair for the simple reason that men in rebellion against God are not going to be fair to men if they are not fair to God! But we can't blame God. He created a good world, and made man in His own image. It is man that has rebelled, not God.

SO, WHAT CAN ONE DO?

Plenty. Of course you can't change the world. You cannot change the "system." You cannot solve all the problems. But you CAN do something about YOU. We must face the fact that God deals with people as individuals. This means you. Whatever else may go on in the world, your own destiny depends on your personal response to God. Whatever change that is made must begin with the person changing his own life to harmonize with the purpose of God.

This doesn't require a revolution of society. It doesn't even always require a change of one's environment. It does require one to believe God and to make up his mind to trust Him and follow His will insofar as He has expressed it.

What God is after is a particular kind of person. He did not create a world and fill it with people just to see if those people would be nice to each other in their own way and make themselves rich with possessions and "have fun." If all wars stopped, all diseases ended and everyone given sufficient money for a lifetime, this would NOT fulfill God's purpose. Were He to solve all your financial, health and social problems, it would not necessarily make you fit for His fellowship.

GOD DISCRIMINATES

God desires men who reflect His image. "Let us make man in our image..." (Genesis 1:26). He seeks those who seek this goal. "For such does the Father seek to be his worshippers" (John 4:23). "God is spirit, and they who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Since God is an intelligent Being, He has fellowship with men on the basis of a knowing relationship. The relationship between man and God, therefore, is a mind-to-mind relationship. It does not depend upon society, nor upon the conditions of the world. No, not even upon the conditions right around you. Obviously these conditions can make your life easier or harder, but they cannot make nor break your response to God.

For the world system is doomed, anyway. Not because modern thinkers said it. Not because some unbelieving theologian said it. Not because of the bomb. But because God has already made and revealed His plans. Romans 8:20-22 explains that the whole creation is corrupted and is perishing. In 2 Peter 3:7-12 it is plainly stated that this world will be destroyed by fire. Even the elements, Peter explains, will melt or be dissolved. The heavens will pass away and the earth and all the wicked shall be burned up. The present chaos in the world is nothing strange nor puzzling to God, but just what He expected men to become when they rebel against Him and refuse His creative will. Finally, as the Bible explains it, the wickedness will be so widespread that God will destroy the whole works.

Therefore instead of thinking that God and Christianity has failed, the present state in the world simply bears out what God has been saying all along, that He will execute judgment upon the world because of its unbelief.

THERE IS ONE HOPE

But out of this doomed world God is selecting a people — “to purify for Himself a people of His own who are zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14). This was the very reason for Christ’s death on the cross, for in that death He “gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age” (Galatians 1:4).

This is what Christ means when He says, “I came to seek and to save the lost” — not meaning “lost” in the sense of bewilderment, but lost in the Day of Judgment when the whole world will be lost in the destruction of fire. Christ is willing to save you from this. “In the world you have tribulation,” He said. “But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” By His resurrection He proved that a sinless man can come forth from death to live as an immortal person forever — thus saved from the general doom of the race.

True, you are not sinless in the sense of never committing a sin. But this is where God’s concern is most clearly seen. Christ took the blame, guilt and penalty for sin, when he died for sin. By dying a human death — the kind that people die — Christ offered His life as a substitute for yours, and met the justice of God to remove your sin — guilt. He “gave His life a ransom for many.”

So God is ransoming people for His “new earth wherein dwells righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13). He is in constant fellowship with these redeemed who have turned to Him in truth, to trust Him totally with their lives. His people, scattered here and there, will undoubtedly suffer from the effects of the worsening condition about them. They will be considered out of step with the times and will find it impossible to make their critics understand. They may be tempted and tried in the crucible of persecution. But finally God will vindicate Himself, and all who believe HIM. Just when all seems lost, Christ will return to snatch from the final destruction all God’s people, not only that are alive, but even raising the dead, that He may lose none of those who belong to Him. These will be His people in the new creation, a race of man in God’s image.

God has given you the freedom to be one of the rebellious ones, whose end is destruction, or to be one of the chosen ones, whose destiny is immortality in the new earth.

He has revealed His desire. He “is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:13). He has no pleasure in the death of His creatures. He must be very sad to see them choosing their own destruction.

World conditions do not defeat God’s purpose in your life, for this does not depend on outside forces. For “neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

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