

# TABLE TALK

Official Publication of the LMS-USA

...these words... shall be upon your heart; you shall teach them... and talk of them... Deut. 6:6,7



November 2020

Vol. 27 No. 4

## God and The Pandemic Jeremiah's God and Our God

by Rev. John Erickson

As has happened again and again throughout history, and now in this time of the world wide pandemic, when something bad, something horrible, some tragedy, some disaster occurs, the question is raised, "Is this from God?" or, "Is this a judgment from God?" or, at the least, "Is God somehow involved in this?" In order to answer this, or most any other substantive question for that matter, it is important to remember that everything begins with God.

### God

Read Genesis 1:1; Psalms 19:1; Psalms 53:1; John 4:24; 1 John 4:8  
The Bible takes God for granted. Its first words are: "In the beginning God." It does not begin by proving the existence of God.

To the Bible, God is self-evident. Everything speaks of Him. Only fools deny God.

The Bible offers no definition of God.

When Jesus said to the Samaritan woman that God is spirit, He gave a description of God, not a definition.

Some older translations of this word read: God is a spirit. This gives the wrong impression of what Jesus said. He did not classify God as a spirit besides other spirits. He described Him over against all other gods who were confined to a locality. God is spirit. God is everywhere because He is spirit. "God is spirit" is the right translation.

When John says that God is love, it is also a description, a characteristic. A definition is a limitation. Definitions may be used of that which is



restricted, but not of Him who is limitless.

### God Has Revealed Himself

Deuteronomy 29:29

The Bible tells us that God has revealed Himself, that is, He has made Himself known to man. According to the Bible, there are three ways in which God has made Himself known:

1. God reveals Himself in nature.

Read Psalms 19:1-6; Psalms 8:1; Romans 1:19-20

According to these passages, what does nature tell of God? Notice the three characteristics of God that nature points to.

A chair could not make another

chair. A horse could not make a dog, and man cannot make a star. Nothing of what we see around us has the power to create other things. The God who has created everything is not in the class of what we see. He is invisible. His power must be everlasting. He must be God.

### 2. God reveals Himself in the conscience.

Read Romans 2:14-15

Conscience is a voice, a function within us. It tells us whether a thing we do is right or wrong. The conscience does not set the standard of what is right or wrong. It simply applies the standard established in the society in which we live. If society approves of divorce for any grievance, then the conscience that has adopted this standard will also approve it. If society condemns divorce, then the conscience that is guided by this standard also will condemn the person who seeks divorce. This is the reason why people's consciences follow different standards so that what one can do with a good conscience another could not do and have peace.

A Christian conscience is the product of the teaching of God's Word and the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word. When we have been taught that right is what God says is right, and wrong is what He says is wrong, then the conscience judges by this standard.

The conscience speaks independently of our wishes, likes, or dislikes. It cannot be bribed, as many a sinner has found who has tried to silence his conscience. It is universal; there is no one who does not have a conscience. The fact that it is universal and independent of man, faithful to the moral standard by which it operates, leads Paul to the conclusion that the conscience is from God. It is God who speaks through the conscience. Therefore the conscience not only points to God but tells us that God does not want us to do what

is wrong. He will punish transgressions.

### 3. God has revealed Himself through Jesus Christ.

Read Hebrews 1:1-3; John 1:18; 14:7-9; 1:14; Colossians 1:19

Finally Christ came and revealed God.

Christ gave us not only the fullest revelation of God but also the complete revelation needed for our salvation.

Nature and conscience can tell us nothing about Christ and the salvation in Christ, nor can they reveal God as the Father in Christ Jesus. Only Christ could do this.

### The Character of God's Self-Revelation

Read Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 12:1-14, 29-36; Exodus 19 and 20; Isaiah 6

**Historic.** God revealed Himself through a historic process. He came to man at certain times in history furnishing information that enabled man to know God.

The purpose of God's self-revelation was to lead man to trust and obey Him. Only so could man be saved from Satan and sin.

Christianity is not a speculative system. It is built on what God has said and done when revealing Himself in history.

**Progressive.** A second characteristic of God's self-revelation is that it is progressive up to Christ. We do not mean that at first the revelation was wrong, later to be set right. Rather we mean that the revelation at first was condensed and embryonic. What was revealed was true but needed to be unfolded by future revelations.

A comparison between Genesis 3:15 and Matthew chapters 26-28 gives us a picture of such unfolding. The promise in Genesis 3:15 is unfolded throughout the Old Testament, while the New Testament reveals the ful-

fillment of it.

When we say that God's revelation was progressive, we do not mean that it is to continue indefinitely. Christ completed God's self-revelation. He gave us all the knowledge of God and completed all the work needed for man's salvation.

**Unto Salvation.** Another quality of God's self-revelation is found in His purpose. God revealed Himself to man in order that man might be saved. Only as we see God's revelation in this light does it become understandable to us.

The record of God's self-revelation unto salvation is found in the Bible.

*Exploring God's Word.* Jacob Tanner; Used by permission of Augsburg Publishing, Mpls., MN. pages 1-4.

One of the things that is most important to understand, is this: that there is no other God than the God of the Bible. We live in a time when most understand that a person can have any god they want, and while that is true, it is not true that any god one might choose is legitimate. There is only one true God. The Bible is clear on this... there is no other God than He who is revealed to us in the pages of Scripture. The God of the Bible is not merely one of a plethora of gods from which we may pick and choose to worship and serve, nor is He to be put on par with other supposed deities. He is the omnipotent Creator and Redeemer of mankind. He made everything and He sustains everything.

Deuteronomy 4:39 - Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other.

Deuteronomy 5:7 - You shall have no other gods before me.

Isaiah 44:8 - Do not tremble, do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago? You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know

not one.

Isaiah 45:18 - For this is what the LORD says--he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited--he says: "I am the LORD, and there is no other.

Isaiah 45:22 - Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.

Isaiah 46:9 - Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.

Acts 4:12 - Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

It is well also, in one's understanding of the one true God, to give consideration to the work of God. One cannot understand God apart from His works, because what God does flows from who He is. Here is an abbreviated list of God's works, past, present, and future: God created the world (Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 42:5); He actively sustains the world (Colossians 1:17); He is executing His eternal plan (Ephesians 1:11) which involves the redemption of man from the curse of sin and death (Galatians 3:13-14); He draws people to Christ (John 6:44); He disciplines His children (Hebrews 12:6); and He will judge the world (Revelation 20:11-15).

## What of Humankind?



In connection with the subject at hand, we have briefly dealt with

God, so how about humankind? How about you and me? If we look at Genesis 1:26 - 2:7, the stress of Scripture is clear, mankind is different from the rest of God's creation. Man is created in the image of God. Man's body is of the earth, but his spirit is akin to God.

Dr. Tanner helps us with this also:

There are three characteristics that meet us on the first pages of the Bible.

1. Man is an intelligent being with the power of abstraction. He can handle ideas. Adam and Eve talked with one another as well as with God. They made clothes, invented tools, and used fire, as we can see in the sacrifices of Cain and Abel. Adam studied the animals and noticed their peculiarities and differences and gave them names that described traits of each kind or variety.

Man's power of abstraction is located in the brow. No animal has a brow.

From the very first, man had the three necessities for progress, namely speech, fire, and tools.

2. Man is a moral being with self-determination and an inherent realization of moral obligations. He chooses between right and wrong. Man from the first was endowed with a conscience. He holds himself responsible for what he does. As a result, man can assume responsibilities.

Adam and Eve were capable of exercising dominion over all God's creation under responsibility to God.

3. Man is a religious being capable of communicating with God and conscious of his likeness to God. The religious nature of man is evident from the first. Adam and Eve lived in fellowship with God in the garden. Sacrifices were used as an expression of their relation to God.

No animal ever built an altar.

These characteristics may be called the constructional or functional image of God. It made man capable of carrying out the great task of subduing the earth and exercising dominion over all its creatures.

Studying the image from a qualitative point of view we find that there was light in the understanding, peace in the conscience, and purity in the will

The Bible tells us that man began as an agriculturist. He was to cultivate and take care of the garden.

His family life was monogamous, that is, one husband and one wife. Children were a token of God's blessing.

Man was also created to be a worker. Work would be an outlet for his energy and creative ability.

Man started on a high plane of civilization. In the sociological scale, agriculture marks a high cultural order.

His ability to work with ideas made him a planner, inventor, creator, and explorer. In his work to subdue the earth all these different abilities were developed.

Read Genesis 4:1-8; 4:23-24; 6:5, 11, 13

According to the Bible the headhunters were not in transitory stages of an evolutionary progress from the lower to the higher.

They were the result of misuse of and falling away from religious and moral truth. They were stages of decay.

The process of the deterioration is pointedly brought out in the passages referred to. Murder, polygamy, and blood-feuds were evidences of decay. Back of these visible evidences was the spiritual decay. Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. As a result the earth was corrupt and filled with

violence.

Read Ephesians 4:17-19

This passage describes the deteriorating influence of sin. Destroying faith and obedience, sin blinds the intelligence, perverts the will-power, and drives its shackled victims ever deeper into the slavery of the lusts of the flesh. It is the road of decay for every constructive force in man.

*Exploring God's Word*: Jacob Tanner;  
Used by permission of Augsburg Publishing, Mpls., MN. pages 63-65

Very important in this discussion is the question of why God created humankind. What is the reason for humankind's existence. The well known reason as stated in the Westminster Shorter Catechism is this: What is man's primary purpose? Man's primary purpose is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

### **Human Nature and the Purpose of Existence**

If you rank the opinions that famous Christians held of human nature from high to low, Luther's opinion would be at the very bottom of the scale (along with Augustine's and John Calvin's). For Luther, human nature was created good by God, but has been totally corrupted by sin. It is not merely that we lack the will power to do what we know is right, although that is certainly true. But our senses and our reason are also corrupted, and so our judgment of right and wrong is also unreliable. There are Christians who have held that God would not give laws in the Bible (the Ten Commandments, for example), and punish us for violating them, if it were not possible for us to fulfill them successfully.

Pelagius was one such Christian, and in a different sense Roman Catholics and Methodists have made a similar case. (They would at least make human ability dependent on the gift of forgiveness and additional outpour-

ings of divine grace.) Luther would have none of it. The first role of the law in the Bible was to convict us, to make us realize we were incapable of fulfilling it, to break down our trust in our own abilities. (Luther did not associate the law with the Old Testament and the promise with the New Testament. He had a more dynamic view of law and gospel. Depending on your context, any biblical text, either Old Testament or New Testament, could count as law if it convicted you of your own inabilities, or as gospel, if it reassured you of God's forgiveness.)

This low view of corrupted, sinful human nature applied, for Luther, not just to the damned, but also to the saved. Those chosen by God for forgiveness are no better than those chosen for damnation—they remain sinners, but forgiven ones.

For Luther what was at stake was divine omnipotence. Any amount of self-reliance for salvation takes away from the power and glory of God, and our reliance on God. This often makes modern people uncomfortable, because it runs against our assumptions about humans as agents creating to some extent their own lives and history, and against our assumptions about responsibility. But it is critical to understanding the Reformation that this is precisely the message that struck people as a great relief. Luther was confident that if his salvation rested in his own hands he would probably fail. He was much better off if it rested completely in God's hands. One factor in the rapid spread of the Reformation is that, in a time of religious unease, many Europeans agreed with him.

The purpose of existence for Lutherans, as for most Christians, is to glorify God and to live in God's presence, not separated from God.

<https://www.patheos.com/library/lutheran/beliefs/human-nature-and-the-purpose-of-existence>

What then was/is to be relationship

of the creature to his/her creator?

There are any number of places in Scripture where we may find an answer to this question, but as we turn to the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 6, we find the answer. "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (vs. 4-5). And this wasn't just for people in the days of the Old Testament. When answering the devil at the time of His temptation Jesus said, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve'" (Luke 4:8). In Mark 12, we find Jesus being asked as to what commandment is the most important of all. He answered: "'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these" (vv. 29-31). Put simply... humankind is to worship God alone and is to serve God alone. Peter and the other apostles agreed with him... that when it came to who it is we are to serve and obey, "We must obey God rather than men!" (Acts 5:29).

Going back to Deuteronomy 6 we find Moses explaining how what he was teaching the people was what God commanded him to teach (v. 1), and they were to follow his teachings "that it may go well with [them]" (v. 3). We see something similar in Exodus 20, at the time of the giving of the commandments at Mount Sinai, God speaks, "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth

generation of those who hate me but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments."

It is clear... the purpose of existence for men, women and children here in this world is that they should glorify God and to live, not separated from God, but to live in His presence.

### Jeremiah's God

In the days of Jeremiah, things were not going well with the people of Judah. National disaster was staring them in the face and they could not imagine why things were looking so bleak. God spoke to His prophet Jeremiah: "When you tell these people all this and they ask you, 'Why has the LORD decreed such a great disaster against us? What wrong have we done? What sin have we committed against the LORD our God?' then say to them, 'It is because your fathers forsook me,' declares the LORD, 'and followed other gods and served and worshipped them. They forsook me and did not keep my law. But you have behaved more wickedly than your fathers. See how each of you is following the stubbornness of his evil heart instead of obeying me. So I will throw you out of this land into a land neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you will serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favor.'" (Jeremiah 16:10-13).

Here we see the reason for the nation's trouble. They had forsaken God... they did not obey His commandments... they behaved wickedly... they set themselves up as being the authority in their own lives. And for all of this, God was not going to show them any favor.

People don't like to think about this, but God is the same, yesterday, today, and forever.

People, and we can all be guilty of this, often refer to God as "our God". Unaware we are doing so, we have put ourselves in the drivers seat. We

might use the right name for God and use the right language, but it is easy for us to begin to shape God into a god who will fit what we want our god to be. And likewise, His Commandments and what Scripture tells us of God's will for us in living out of our lives... we have brought into line with our own thinking or the thinking of the 'experts' of the day, or that of society. We see this today, for example, in the view of so many theologians and churches with regard to abortion, marriage, and the LGBTQ+ lifestyle among many other things.

But God is God. God is who He is. I cannot make God into what I want Him to be. And I am not free to make God's word say what I want it to say. God said of Himself, "I AM WHO I AM" (Ex 3:14). "...my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9).

The contrast is most interesting. In Jeremiah 17:5ff we read, "This is what the LORD says: 'Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.'"

A multitude of voices of those convinced of their own wisdom back in Jeremiah's day, urged the people to follow the direction they were giving. And the people took a liking to

what they had to say. Whenever anyone makes up their mind to side-step what is found in God's Word... or go against God's word... that person will find plenty of help. There will always be those ready to tell someone (or a people) what they like to hear. It is something people of every age do not what to give consideration to... but to go against the Word of God... to go against what God's Word clearly indicates, is senseless and suicidal.

Why do people prefer death to life? The answer lies in this, that "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure" (Jeremiah 17:9). The result? People and nations make their choice, and the "LORD search(s) the heart and examine(s) the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve." (Jeremiah 17:10).

As to the disaster that befell Judah, and then later, the disaster that befell the great and powerful Babylon... it begs the question: "If such a nation could fall... what nation can stand?" Well God would prove to those of Jeremiah's day, and He did so prove to Babylon and all nations, that He alone is God the Almighty. He, God, decides the rise and fall of nations.

### The Potter and the Clay

Something else that comes into play in all of this is what we find in Jeremiah 18 in the important lesson God told the prophet Jeremiah to teach the people of Judah by means of an object lesson. Jeremiah watched as a potter shaped a pot



from clay... but the pot was flawed so the potter took the clay of the flawed pot and made another pot that was to his liking. The point being, is the nations of the world are in God's hands... and if at any time He is not pleased what He sees of that nation... He is free to do whatever He pleases with that nation. It is important to consider that God does not act arbitrary toward nations or individuals, rather He deals with them according to His word and promises.

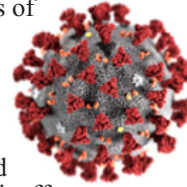
Nineveh of Jonah's day is an example of this. God threatened destruction of that evil nation, but then that city repented, and the city was spared. Likewise us, if we as individuals and/or as nations persist in impenitence, He will not forgive, but if there is repentance, then He will act in line with His own promises. He will forgive and relent.

Again, God of Scripture is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The way God dealt with peoples and nations in the days of Jeremiah, He still can, and we can be sure He still does, deal with peoples and nations in our day. Keep in mind in all this that the "hows" and "whys" and "whens" of His dealings in our day, may not always be apparent to even the most discerning among us. We might think of Achan and what happened to him - but then also of what happened to all his family as well as his animals (see Joshua 7). Or we can go back to the book of Numbers, chapter 16, and what happened not only to disobedient Korah but to all who had connection with him. We might think in the New Testament of the man born blind (John 9). He experienced what looked to many as a judgment of God... but it was quite the opposite. Or those murdered or those upon whom the tower in Siloam fell (see Luke 13). It is not easy to discern the 'whys' of God's dealings. But, God is in control, and His desire is that by one means or another, all will be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth ( 1 Timo-

thy 2:4).

## Now - what of the pandemic?

There are all kinds of ideas as to what the virus is all about... where it came from... how it spreads... why it affects some and not others... why it affects persons differently. We could ask the same questions when it comes to any number of other things that affect us such as earthquakes, hurricanes, fires, as well as most every sickness. Why? Why this? Why me and not someone else? And as to the 'why' question... it is important as to where we look for the answer. The real answer, or the root answer to the issue, can be found in only one place. It can be found in the revelation that we have been given by the one true God. In holy Scripture (in the Bible) we find the answer to our "why" question to be sin.



Our first parents sinned, and that sin brought death. While death ultimately brings the cession of life, it, in the meantime, brings sorrow, pain, difficulties, and hurts of many kinds. The prophet Jeremiah spoke to this very thing in the midst of what was happening in his day (see chapter 10).

The hope of Judah and Jerusalem was in the Lord. And remember now, reference to Judah and Jerusalem would be a reference to people who considered themselves members of God's family. But these people had abandoned the Lord for idols. They had left the living God for nothing... for that is what idols are. Idols are no more than products of human ingenuity. In other words, the root of the trouble that the people experienced in Jeremiah's day can be found, first and foremost, in their sin of disobedience to the First Commandment. And as was made reference to earlier in this article... if they



made for themselves an idol of any sort they should remember that God, the Lord their God, is a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation (see Exodus 20:4-5).

Let's not consider the world as a whole at this point; let's consider just our own nation. A 2017 Pew research survey reports that the vast majority of Americans (90%) believe in some kind of higher power. 56% profess faith in God as described in the Bible and another 33% say they believe in another type of higher power or spiritual force. Only one-in-ten Americans say they don't believe in God or a higher power of any kind. Back in the days of Jeremiah and on to our day... every age has its idols. It is foolish to worship the products of our own making. Yet such worship is the most evident consequence of sin. Paul wrote to the Romans, "What may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them... so they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him... their foolish hearts were darkened... and [they] exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images" (Romans 1:19-21,23).

It is true yet today in this time of the pandemic, there is no one like [the God of Scripture]. He is the Creator; by His wisdom and power, He fashioned all that we see and know. He is the eternal and living King and God, in control of all that He made, providing for us a sure and safe foundation upon which to rest and trust. He has shown and revealed Himself to us in Christ so that we do not need to grope or search for signs of His presence or person. He has not left us outside having to try to see through some frosted window, thus hopefully finding Him as best we can. No, rather through the perfect life and the innocent death of Christ, God has made us His own, drawn us to Himself, forgiven us for Christ's sake.

And in Christ He has drawn near to us and become our Helper. (see, *Jeremiah, Lamentations: The Peoples' Bible*; Northwestern Publishing House, p. 67).

John, the apostle, urged his readers, "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21).

Dare we think that our (as individuals and as a nation) lackadaisical attitude toward God and His Word might not have at least something to do with God sending or allowing this "disaster," or maybe "judgment," or "wake up call," or whatever label you want to put on it, to come our way? And likewise the world as a whole... where is the world in relationship to its Creator and Redeemer?

One of the reasons God brought judgment on Babylon was that He took vengeance on the nation that destroyed His Temple. I think we can safely say that it was not the building that was the issue at that time... rather the issue was the character of the God who was worshiped in that Temple. The Babylonians who destroyed the temple thought they destroyed or at least put down the God of Israel. But God was not limited to His Temple. God is God... God is God over all... God is still God over all.

God's intention in what He did to Judah and Jerusalem was to refine and test them. What else can I do because of the sin of my people?" God asks (see Jeremiah 9:7). But it wasn't just what might appear to many as judgment - God was disciplining them. "Therefore I will teach them--this time I will teach them my power and might. Then they will know that my name is the LORD (Jeremiah 16:21). And we know that there were those who in repentance and faith returned to the Lord. Might not this be at least part of the purpose of our Lord at this time in our history?

As to the Pandemic, (or maybe we might think of the destructive hurri-

canes, or the California fires, or any number of other disasterous events), it is so easy to point to say, global warming, or chemicals in our water



or in our building materials, or fracking, or who knows what. But might not God - in what He has, at the very least, allowed - want us to consider is what He instructed his prophet with regard to what we find in Jeremiah 16:10ff, "When...they ask you, 'Why has the LORD decreed such a great disaster against us? What wrong have we done? What sin have we committed against the LORD our God?' then say to them, 'It is because your fathers forsook me,' declares the LORD, 'and followed other gods and served and worshipped them. They forsook me and did not keep my law. But you have behaved more wickedly than your fathers. See how each of you is following the stubbornness of his evil heart instead of obeying me.'"

Yes we can look to China as the reason... yes we can blame government officials as to the way things were handled... but first and foremost I would hope, that in light of what we know of God's dealings with nations and individuals in the past, we might take a spiritual inventory of ourselves and our nation. Is the God of Scripture the God of our lives? Have we fallen short of the glory of God? We who worship the God of heaven and earth, is it little more than a rote exercise, or do we worship in spirit and in truth? Do we love the Lord our God and our neighbors as ourselves?

But lest we despair... let us, in all of this, remember verse 6 of Exodus 20. In verse 5, God had warned of the disaster that would come upon those having other gods before Him, but then in verse 6, we find some precious words of gospel. "...but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments." We find this also in the days of Jeremiah. In chapter 16, when God had spoken of the disaster that was to come on those who refused to listen to Him, those words of warning are followed by words of gospel, "...behold the days are coming declares the Lord, when it will no longer be said, 'as the Lord lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,' but 'As the Lord lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them.' For I will bring them back to their own land that I gave to their fathers."

Yes, even the faithful of God's chosen people were often caught up in the disasters brought upon the nations in the days of the Old Testament. Likewise many true Christians today are confronted with many of the same disasters that face the unbelievers of the nations of the world in our day. But herein is the difference: the people of God, in the days of old, as well as today, are people of hope!

There are many promises in Scripture that deal with this. For us in this day, the words of our Lord as found in John 10 are especially precious. Of those who have received Him, of those who He has made members of His flock, Jesus says, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:28,29). And then also the familiar words of Romans 8:28-39 come into play here. Paul in verse 27 makes mention of

the fact that the Holy Spirit “intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” And that fact certainly plays into this, that we can know “that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” Therefore, no matter what it is that we as children of our heavenly Father may be confronted with here in this world, we can with confidence say, “If God is for us, who is against us?” “Who [or what] will [or can] separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, 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.”

God shares with the prophet Jeremiah, His purpose in all that happened to His people in those days. I believe God’s purpose then, and His purpose now, is something that has not changed. “I will teach them--this time I will teach them my power and might. Then they will know that my name is the LORD.

And there is this... I am referring to 2 Chronicles 7:13-14. God is speaking, “When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

God is not asking here for prayers from everyone. He is not asking prayers for all who are caught up in the various troubles that plague the human race. What He is asking for is the prayers of His people. Could some of the things the nations of the

world and our own nation are experiencing be brought to an end if only God’s people... if only we as God’s people... if His church... were faithful in prayer?

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns. The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Come, behold the works of the LORD; see what desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. "Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth." The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. (Psalm 46)

Children of the heavenly Father  
Safely in His bosom gather;  
Nestling bird nor star in heaven  
Such a refuge e'er was given.

God His own doth tend and nourish  
In His holy courts they flourish  
From all evil things He spares them,  
In His mighty arms He bears them.

Praise the Lord in joyful numbers,  
Your Protector never slumbers;  
At the will of your Defender  
Ev'ry foeman must surrender.

Though He giveth or He taketh,  
God His children ne'er forsaketh;  
His the loving purpose soley  
To preserve them pure and holy.

Lina Sandell Berg, 1832-1903

Table Talk  
P. O. Box 31  
Chetek, WI 54728

The LMS-USA is Lutheran Church body describing itself as *Biblical, Confessional, Evangelical, Liturgical and Congregational*. It is a 'Forum' in which there is an on going discussion of theological issues and concerns among clergy and lay alike. The LMS-USA meets annually for a Theological Conference and this publication, besides carrying news of the Ministerium and Synod, functions also as a vehicle for this continuing dialogue.

Lutheran  
Ministerium and  
**LMS** Synod - USA  
□ *A Synodical Forum by Subscription* □

For information or to make  
comment write:

President/Pastor, LMS-USA  
12233 Waterview Circle  
Indianapolis, IN 46229

Internet Contact:  
revralphs@sglobal.net

To: