

## “The Whole Creation Groaneth”

*“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” — Romans 8:22-23*

The sadness and sorrow shown on the daily news is often so unbearable to watch that we must turn our eyes away. And, it is not only humanity that is suffering, but “the whole creation” — animals, trees, oceans, and even the air we breathe. Over the past one hundred years, this entire planet has been especially compromised by the carelessness of man. We need only point to the Gulf oil disaster to show the pain being endured by every element of creation



which will have devastating effects for generations to come.

Some have asked, “If God has a plan to put an end to all this suffering, what is He waiting for?” The Apostle Paul in our theme text provides the answer. The *poor groaning creation is waiting for the adoption* — the manifestation of the *sons of God*. (Romans 8:19-23) This word *manifestation* is taken from the Greek word *apokalupsis* which means *revealing*. Until the *sons of God* are *adopted* and *revealed* the *whole creation* must continue to wait for relief from their pain and suffering.

### WHO ARE THE SONS OF GOD AND WHY SHOULD THE CREATION WAIT FOR THEM?

The Apostle Paul explains who these *sons of God* are when he states earlier in Roman 8:14-17 “As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God. The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” Simply put, the *sons of God* are those who are willing to lay their lives down with their Master, to be “*dead with him*” and thereby prove to be faithful through all the trials and tests that God has permitted to come upon them. These *sons* make up what is termed the *body of Christ*, the *little flock* — the *Church*. (Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 12:12; Matthew 16:18; Luke 12:32) They follow their Master, who, “*Though he were a Son, yet*

*learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”* Hebrews 5:8-10

Like their Master, his followers must also learn obedience by the things which they suffer — proving worthy to receive the position in heaven to which they will be exalted. The faith and character of these *sons of God* must be developed, tested and

perfected. “*The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ...*” 1 Peter 1:7

These trials upon the *sons of God* are preparing them to live and reign with Christ in his Kingdom, dispensing blessings, teaching righteousness and bringing healing to a world which has been in crisis since the fall of Adam in the Garden. The Church, when complete, will be able to say to those raised to life again upon the earth that they understand every ill that the world has endured. Jesus’ followers have trusted in him to cover their sins and help them to overcome their weaknesses even while living in this present world dominated by sin and selfishness. “*...blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.*” Philippians 2:14-16; Revelation 2:10

Therefore, before the waiting time is over and the poor groaning creation can receive the promised relief from all of its troubles, the body of Christ needs to learn sympathy for the suffering that has been endured for six millennia. Jesus, their example, had also become sympathetic as he endured his trials. “*Our High Priest is not one who cannot feel sympathy for our weaknesses. On the contrary, we have a High Priest who was tempted in every way that we are, but did not sin.*”

(Hebrews 4:15 *Good News Bible*) There is no better way to strengthen and encourage the hearts of others than to have endured the same kind of trial. As every support group will testify, the most effective healing comes from a sympathetic partner who has *“been there and done that.”*

This work of perfecting the *sons of God* has been going on throughout the Christian era. Christians have lived in a hostile world, filled with opposition to their stand for truth and righteousness, and God has promised these a reward for their faithfulness: *“It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him...”* (2 Timothy 2:11, 12) Going back to Romans 8, the Apostle points out in verse 18: *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”* Thus, these *sons of God* are fully committed to Him and are willing to submit to the refining work of their Heavenly Father. *“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when ye encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”* James 1:3, 4 *NAS*



### FOR WHAT IS THE WHOLE CREATION WAITING?

The entire creation is waiting for and longs for a better day — one without the groaning, travail, pain and the sorrow of death. Both the Old and the New Testaments are saturated with words of promise and hope. All the prophets spoke of the *“restitution of all things.”* (Acts 3:21) *“And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come...”* Haggai 2:7

Despite the extreme suffering mankind has experienced generation upon generation, something constructive will come from it. God realizes the enormity of human suffering, and, from a time *“before the foundation of the world,”* He planned for the resurrection of all who have ever lived, and an opportunity to gain everlasting life. (1 Peter 1:19, 20) Because *“God is love,”* He intends to turn these *“cursed”* conditions into an opportunity to teach mankind the extreme consequence of sin and rebellion. (1 John 4:7; Genesis 3:17) Experience with Satan’s evil world will teach mankind the everlasting lesson of trust, loyalty and obedience to our all-wise Creator. *“It is a difficult exercise which God has imposed upon the sons of Adam to develop themselves by it.”* (Ecclesiastes 1:13—*Fenton Translation*) Note that God does not *cause* the evil, but has *permitted* it for a period of time. He is unwilling that any should perish, but wills, on the contrary, that all shall have an opportunity to turn to Him that they may have everlasting life. (2 Peter 3:9; 2 Timothy 2:3, 4) It is for this very purpose that Messiah’s Kingdom will be established in great glory and with full power. In due time it will bring the salvation for which the poor groaning creation has so long waited. It will come with the *manifestation of*

*the sons of God* in Kingdom power and glory. Romans 8:19

These *sons of God* will have a special mission to do in the near future. They are spoken of as *heirs* of a great promise given to Abraham. This promise declared that all the families of the earth — the poor groaning creation — would be blessed. *“...if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”* (Galatians 3:29) *Abraham’s seed*, Christ and his Church, will have the privilege of sharing in the work of the Messianic Age. This work will bring about the completion of the covenant to Abraham which has promised a full opportunity to everyone who has ever lived to partake of the blessings provided through their redeemer. The world of mankind, raised to life again, will be instructed so that they might walk up the highway of holiness to atonement with their Creator—back into full harmony with Him. (2 Timothy 2:5, 6) Then all will fully appreciate the wisdom, justice, loving mercy and power of God. What a magnificent plan of salvation when *“Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”* Luke 3:5, 6

### THE WAITING TIME ALMOST OVER

At some point in the near future, this time of waiting for the refining work of the *sons of God* will be over. The Scriptures state that there will be a *full number*.

(Romans 11:25) Matthew quoted Jesus in his parable of the wheat and the tares: *“In the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to [figuratively] burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.”* (Matthew 13:30) He also stated that *“the harvest is the end of the age.”* (Verse 39) This illustrates the end of the Gospel Age — the Christian era — when the Church, those who were willing to suffer with Christ during this nighttime of sin, will be complete.

This elect body of Christ is spoken of in Acts 15:14-17: *“God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name... after this I will return [at the second advent] and build again the tabernacle of David [set up the kingdom of God]... that the residue of men [those who did not accept Christ now] might seek after the Lord...”* God’s work since the death of Jesus has not been to convert all humankind at this time, but merely to *take out* or to *call out* a people for his name. In His Kingdom, all the *residue of men*, who are not of these called out ones, will have their opportunity to seek the Lord by the guidance of Christ and his completed Church. Like him (1 John 3:2) they shall be compassionate priests, understanding judges, and benevolent kings (Revelation 20:6; 1 Corinthians 6:2). Together, as the composite body of Christ, they will fully understand the sin sick, mentally warped, emotionally scarred and physically marred world of mankind. It will be the joyful task of Christ and his Church to help bring mankind up *the highway of holiness*. Isaiah 35:8

**“THOUGH IT TARRY, WAIT...”**

The prophet Habakkuk stated: *“The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come.”* (Habakkuk 2:3) The Scriptures assure us that *“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”* (Psalm 30:5) Our faith can be strengthened in the promise that God has a loving reason for everything He plans and purposes to do. At this time, He has *permitted* the exceeding sorrows of a world left on its own and under the present ruler of darkness, Satan. When God finally says, *It is enough, peace be still*, we can rest assured that there will be great changes in the earth, and all will begin to see that the *permission of evil* was both educational and preparatory to the ushering of mankind into the ages of blessing to come, wherein *“all the families of the earth will be blessed.”* (Genesis 28:14) Each will have a full, fair opportunity at that time to gain the knowledge necessary to grow to perfection and to attain everlasting life through their great redeemer and his reigning Church. Isaiah 26:9

**GOD’S COMPASSIONS FAIL NOT**

It takes extreme faith now to believe that there will be an ultimately beautiful end to all of the tragic stories — to believe that God is not indifferent to every sorrow. God commissioned Jeremiah: *“Tell the people about my sorrow and say: ‘May my eyes flow with tears day and night, may I never stop weeping, for my people are deeply wounded and are badly hurt. When I go out in the fields, I see the bodies of men killed in war; when I go into the towns, I see people starving to death.’”* (Jeremiah 14:17 Good News Bible) *“In all their afflictions, He [God] was afflicted.”* (Isaiah 53:9) It is comforting to know that when man suffers God suffers, and with Divine foreknowledge, His wisdom has planned for the eternal welfare of all, and His Divine love and power will attain that end.

In the not far distant future, all those who have died will come forth from their graves to be reunited with their loved ones. Though God’s plans are misunderstood now, in due time His merciful character and government will be vindicated. (Luke 21:21-32) The Apostle John describes this time in Revelation 21:1-4: *“And I saw a new heaven [spiritual rule] and a new earth [new social*

*order upon earth under this benevolent heavenly government]: for the first heaven [corrupt spiritual systems] and the first earth [society oppressed under the leadership of Satan] were passed away... And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem*

*[Christ and his Church], coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”*

This is the hope of the poor groaning creation who have been waiting for *the sons of God*. It will be a glorious time with grand opportunities for every man, woman and child to learn to know the Lord, to obey him, and to grow to mental, moral and physical perfection. This does not mean universal everlasting life regardless of obedience, for the Scriptures declare that such as refuse to profit by these glorious opportunities granted them shall be destroyed from amongst the people in the second death — *“They shall be as though they had not been.”* (Obadiah 16; Acts 3:19-23) We believe that this will be rare, however, for the Scriptures indicate that the majority *“shall return [from their graves], and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads...”* (Isaiah 35:10) Thus will God’s loving plan bring all the willing and obedient into harmony with Him in a

universe free from fear, oppression, pain and death.

*“He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”* Isaiah 25:7-9

**JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING**

**No more natural disasters:** *“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain...”* Isaiah 11:9

**No more evil:** *“No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast...”* *“And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie...”* Isaiah 35:9; Revelation 21:27

**No more dying:** *“Death where is thy sting, grave where is thy victory.”* *“...and there shall be no more death...”* 1 Corinthians. 15:55; Revelation 21:4

**No more works of Satan:** *“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”* 1 John 3:8

**No more homelessness or starvation:** *“They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit. They shall not plant and another eat.”* Isaiah. 65:21-23

**No more sickness:** *“And no inhabitant will say I am sick.”* *“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing...”* Isaiah 33:24; Isaiah 35:5

**No more wars:** *“They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation neither shall they learn war anymore.”* Micah 4:3

**No more sadness:** *“...good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.”* *“...they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”* Luke 2:10; Isaiah 35:10

**No more fear:** *“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.”* Isaiah 11:6

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