

# "No Way Out"

*Luke 21: 25, 26*

In plain television view of the Bosnian killings, the Christian West has a dilemma. Both military intervention and milder economic sanctions promise terrible consequences. Allowing the violence repeats the shameful do-nothing failures of World War II. On June 28, 1914, the spark that ignited the Great War was lit by a Serbian anarchist in Sarajevo, Bosnia. Later, to fix things the so-called "peace of Versailles" provided for an amalgamation of Southern Slavic peoples—Slovenians, Croats, Bosnians, Montenegrins, Macedonians and Serbs. This threw Ottomans and Hapsburgs together—a mix of Catholics, Orthodox and Moslem.

During World War II, Croats cooperated with the Nazis against their Serbian neighbors. Post war Communists held all these factions in check. Now with the Communist suppression broken, strong latent nationalism has erupted as "ethnic cleansing" producing new large-scale rapes and murders.

In desperation to keep some semblance of "world peace," the nations are gathering in such alliances as the United Nations. But the "peace-keeping" forces have no peace to keep. Committing forces means the risk of getting caught in an inescapable "black hole" conflict. What to do? There are no simple choices. There seems to be no way out. No human way out.

## Who Said There was 'No Way Out'?

When Jesus talked about the nations reaching a point of "no way out," he was actually answering a question (Luke 21:7).

His apostles were asking about the destruction of their temple which they associated with the end of their age and mistakenly with Jesus' return. In order not to discourage them about the long time that would pass before he would return—long after the destruction of their temple, he simply described many events that would have to take place before he would return. In this way he prepared them (as well as later Christians) for the long wait. After vividly portraying this period of waiting, he concluded by encouraging them, "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:8-19).

Then Jesus addressed their specific question about Jerusalem and the temple (Luke 21:20-24). The Great Teacher realized his disciples would not be able to comprehend that while the collapse of the temple and Jerusalem was imminent, their destruction would also portray the destruction of an anti-Christ system at the end of the age. But Jesus encouraged a way for Christians to flee Jerusalem. "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains...." Many Jewish Christians did escape

Jerusalem in an extraordinary but temporary lull while Titus laid siege to Jerusalem 67-70 A. D. Prophetically, Jesus was also suggesting a way of escape for Christians from the false Christian system at the end of the age. Then they do not flee to literal mountains, but to Christ's kingdom (see also Matt. 24:15-19). Christians have a way out by faith.

## **A Nation with a Separate Destiny**

Even in such an awful prophecy about literal Jerusalem being destroyed and people being scattered, Jesus explained that Jerusalem would be "trodden down" only until "the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (vs. 24). Not only would there come a time when Jerusalem would cease to be under Gentile domination, but that Israel as a nation would "shoot forth" (revive) as the "fig tree" (vss. 29,31).

Israel's restoration would be a sign that "summer is nigh," that the Kingdom is being established (vss. 32-33).

The "times of the Gentiles" did expire with World War I. The church-state ruling houses of Europe were broken. One of the few positive results of World War I was the Balfour Declaration (1917) which gave support to the creation of a Jewish State. But the regathering and restoration of Israel have been arduous and painful. Still it would appear that Israel—with enemies without and conflict within—also has "no way out." But the Scriptures are clear that though Israel would experience difficulties in the end times, it would not be destroyed as a nation. The other nations of the world, however, would come to their national end in great tribulation. "For I am with thee [Israel], saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee..." (Jer. 30:11).

In fact, while anarchy will pull the nations down, armed forces from those nations, intent on destroying Jerusalem, will actually be destroyed themselves because God will fight for Israel. "Then shall the LORD go forth and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle" (Zech. 14:1-3).

The ironic twist is that the peoples of those same nations which were destroyed will later come back to worship the Lord in Jerusalem (Zech. 14:16). When the "mountain," the Kingdom of God is fully set up, "all nations shall flow unto it." They will come to Jerusalem to seek the God of Israel and learn of God's ways (Isaiah 2:1-4).

"The Powers of Heaven Shall be Shaken"

Jesus pointed out that when he would return at the end of the age, the nations of earth would not only find themselves in such a "no-way-out" predicament, but that the very heavens would shake (Luke 21:26). How would the heavens "shake"?

When Jesus spoke of the "fig tree," "the sun," "the moon," "the stars" and his coming on a "cloud," it is important to understand that he was speaking in figurative language. That

was his method (Matt. 13:13-17). The "heavens" represent the religious element of this world order as opposed to the "earth," the secular element. At the same time that the secular world is in trouble—so too is the religious, Christianity.

The religious world is "shaken" of public confidence. The religious element no longer offers the stability and security it did in the past. The Gospel light of the "sun" appears darkened and obscured. The reflective light ("moon") of the Old Testament is no longer considered a guiding light by many. Both the true Gospel and false gospels have fallen into disrepute. In ancient maritime navigation, stars told the captains of ships where they were and where to go. "Stars" are teachers. Today true Christian teachers are fallen from honor. False Christian leaders also are continually being exposed and viewed with disdain.

Notwithstanding the illusion that Christians will soon convert this nation or other nations of the world, Christianity is being "shaken." The most rapidly growing religion in the world is Islam.

### **Pseudo Christs Offering a Way**

In the parallel account of Jesus' prophecy found in Matthew 24, there are two distinct references to false [pseudo] Christs. Not only would false claims be made throughout the Gospel Age (vs. 5), but at the end of the age (vs. 24), many would also make such preposterous claims. Many false Christ's have rallied a small following for a short period of time—while the rest of the world would look on in appalled amazement. A most recent false Christ, cultist David Koresh, while adhering to the traditional Christian beliefs of the trinity and hell fire, added a few deranged claims of his own.

However, there have also been anti-Christs [not against Christ but attempting to take the place of Christ—a counterfeit Christ]. Great church systems have claimed holy authority and have used their power through the might of kings and leaders to control both believer and unbeliever alike. The damage they have done in the name of Christ is horrifying.

Such has been the recent triangle of maniacal behavior in the Balkans—Serbian Orthodox against Croatian Catholic against Bosnian Moslem. It is very odd that while Jesus said, "My Kingdom is not of this world else would my servants fight for it," the followers of mainline Christian churches see no conflict and have regularly taken up arms to kill and be killed, much the same as the "Davidians" and other "cults."

### **"Men's hearts failing them for fear"**

The "sea and the waves roaring" (vs. 25) represent the restless, clamorous masses of humanity. The breakdown of the Communist monolith has spawned new-nation states in response to long dormant nationalist aspirations. Despite the excitement and satisfaction

of nationalist desires, such as the unification of Germany, frustrations are frightening. Economic inequity in Germany has caused recent labor disputes and ethnic hostilities against immigrants. Tens of thousands of dissatisfied eastern Europeans trek west in search of a better life. They too will be welcomed with hostility.

Thus while Jesus predicted there would come a time when the nations would have "no way out," the "powers of heaven shall be shaken" also. The result: "Men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Luke 21:26). It is not on a literal "cloud" that Jesus returns. When "he cometh with clouds," they are the clouds of trouble (Rev. 1:7). Eventually the world of mankind will "see"—perceive—that behind the trouble in the world is Christ setting up his Kingdom of righteousness.

### **"Rejoice when you see"**

True Christians are asked by Jesus to not despair when they see the trouble in the world, but to look up in faith and rejoice. But Christians do not "look up" if they are "overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness and cares of this life" (Luke 21:34-36). If they are too involved in worldly priorities, they will be too busy to search the Scriptures and notice the significance of world conditions. The "day" is here and many are "unawares." Christians are to "watch" when "these things begin to come to pass."

The "way out" is the Kingdom. Faithful, watching Christians with Jesus will be there to help the peoples of the nations into that Kingdom (Rev. 21:24). Send today for a copy of the booklet "I Will Come Again."