

REAL HOPE FOR THE REAL WORLD

In contrast with a materialist or secularist point of view the biblical worldview offers real hope for the real world in which we live. For the Christian nature is not closed to the supernatural. We believe in divine intervention. For the Christian reality is not composed simply of matter, energy, and chance. Our lives have purpose and possibility. Likewise, history has meaning and it is not simply produced by the strong or ruthless. For the follower of Jesus Christ real change is really possible. In Christ nothing is truly hopeless.

First of all, we believe in miracles. Consider Psalm 107. The psalm describes four distinct cases of divine intervention. Two are related to self-inflicted suffering due to sin (vs. 10-16 and 17-22) and two concern affliction due to the human condition “under the sun” (Eccl 1:3) (vs. 4-9 and 23-32). In each case God is depicted as the God of great reversals.

Vs. 10-11 portray a scene of hopelessness, peril, and powerlessness, for “some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons.” Why? “For they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High.” Still, their fate was not fixed, because “They cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress” (v. 13). Likewise, verse 17 describes the destiny of the classic fool in the Bible: “Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction.” In their case, as well, they cried out to God and “He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction” (v. 20).

Verses 4 and 5 portray someone who has lost her way in life. “Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.” Yet, in this case also God intervened on their behalf: “He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in” (v. 7). Others were engaged in normal activities, as they “went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters” (v. 20). Then, disaster struck: “For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea” (v. 25). They, too, cried out to God in their distress and “he brought them to their desired haven” (v. 30b).

Psalm 107 is a testimony that this world is not a closed, natural system. God can intervene and does so -- often. In fact, this psalm is a theology of reversal and font of wisdom: “Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD” (v. 43).

Secondly, the biblical worldview teaches that history is moving toward a goal and destiny. It is not a façade or oblivion, as Karl Marx declared: “History repeats itself, first as tragedy, second as farce.” It is not merely a comedy or tragic opera: “All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances, And one man in his time plays many parts” (William Shakespeare). Nor is history an absurdity, as the comedian and cynic, Woody Allen, suggested: “More than any other time in history, mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other, to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly.”

Rather, the Scriptures reveal a clear eternal trajectory pulsating within time and experience. Because of God’s great love, He created a physical environment in which to tabernacle with the crown of creation, mankind (Gen 1-2). Humanity’s great reward and goal is the presence of God, Himself (Rev 21:3). Ever since the entrance of sin (Gen 3), all that God does is redemptive and re-creative to that end: to make us holy so that we can dwell with Him in a holy environment — forever (Tit 2:11-14). The incarnation, ministry, and sacrifice of Jesus Christ enable this plan

to succeed, because Christ will finish the work that Adam failed to do. The project manager, so to speak, is the Holy Spirit, who will bring about restoration in a “new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells” to use the words of 2 Peter 3:13. One day God will unveil His cosmic empire, a homeland, free of sin and Satan in which human beings can truly flourish.

To put it another way, God is in the process of populating His church and someday there will be a cosmic reversal. God will dwell with us forever in His kingdom: the everlasting tabernacle, the entire earth, the renewed creation. We look forward to a new Eden restored to its greatest potential, a nexus of divine presence, peace, and prosperity forever. In the meantime, our lives have purpose and significance. Every reenactment of Gospel love in this life point forward to the restoration and reversal yet to come in God’s cosmic empire.

So, for the Christian there is real hope for reality, despite sin and foolishness. We believe that real change is really possible and that everything is subject to reversal, according to God’s wise plan.