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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



WHY SO MUCH
SUFFERING?
WHEN WILL IT
END?



So Many Innocent Lives Destroyed!

Little Noelle was an affectionate child who loved to draw. One summer evening she wandered into her backyard and somehow tumbled into the family's swimming pool. She drowned just two weeks before her fourth birthday.

Charlotte, Daniel, Olivia, Josephine . . . These are the names of some of the 20 six- or seven-year-olds among the 26 victims gunned down at a school in Connecticut, U.S.A., on December 14, 2012. At a memorial service, President Obama called out the children's names and told the grieving audience: "These tragedies must end."

Eighteen-year-old Bano left Iraq in 1996 and moved with her family to Norway. Her friends called her by the nickname Sun Rays. Sadly, however, on July 22, 2011, Bano was one of the 77 victims whose lives were cut short by an extremist, who boasted: "I wish to apologize . . . that I wasn't able to execute more."

Similar heart-wrenching stories have been reported over and over around the world. Think of the grief and pain that have resulted from accidents, crime, warfare, terrorism, natural disasters, and other tragedies. So many innocent lives snuffed out and so much suffering, often for no apparent reason!

Some people blame God, reasoning that our Creator does not care about the human fami-

ly. Others conclude that God sees our suffering but simply chooses not to intervene. Still others say that such tragedies are predestined. There seems to be no end to opinions on the subject. Where can we find reliable and satisfying answers? In the following articles, we will look into God's Word, the Bible, for answers on what causes suffering and how it will be brought to an end.

Why All the Suffering?

To understand why there is so much suffering and why human efforts to eliminate it have been unsuccessful, we need to identify the real causes behind it all. Though the causes are varied and complex, we can be thankful that the Bible can help us to identify them. In this article, we will examine five fundamental reasons why there is so much suffering. We invite you to consider carefully what the Bible says and see how God's Word helps us to look beyond the surface to discern the true cause of this important problem.—2 Timothy 3:16.



■ EFFECTS OF BAD GOVERNMENT

"When anyone wicked bears rule, the people sigh," says the Bible.—Proverbs 29:2.

History is filled with dictators who ruled with an iron fist, bringing untold suffering to their subjects. Of course, that is not true of all rulers. Some may have the best of intentions for their fellowmen. However, once they are in power, they often find that their efforts are frustrated by infighting and power struggles. Or they may abuse their power for personal gain, to the detriment of the people. "History is a tale of efforts that failed, of aspirations that weren't realized," said former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

The Bible also points out: "It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step." (Jeremiah 10:23) Imperfect humans lack the necessary wisdom and foresight to manage all their own affairs successfully. If people cannot direct their own steps, how can they direct the steps of

a nation? Can you see why human rulers do not have the ability to eliminate suffering? In fact, more often than not, bad government, or rulership, is the cause of suffering!

■ INFLUENCE OF FALSE RELIGION

"By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves," said Jesus.—John 13:35.

Religious leaders of every creed and denomination preach love and unity. The reality is that they have failed to instill in their followers a love strong enough to eliminate biases. Rather than helping to cultivate love, religion often contributes to the division, bigotry, and strife among peoples and national groups. In the conclusion of his book *Christianity and the World Religions*, theologian Hans Küng wrote: "The most fanatical, the cruelest political struggles are those that have been colored, inspired, and legitimized by religion."

In addition, clerics of many religions have openly condoned premarital and extramarital sex and homosexuality. This has led to the spread of disease, abortions, unwanted pregnancies, and broken marriages and families, resulting in untold pain and anguish.

■ HUMAN IMPERFECTION AND SELFISH DESIRES

“Each one is tried by being drawn out and enticed by his own desire. Then the desire, when it has become fertile, gives birth to sin.”
—James 1:14, 15.

All of us, because of inherited imperfection, are prone to errors and mistakes and have to fight against the desire for “doing the things willed by the flesh.” (Ephesians 2:3) When wrong desire coincides with opportunity, however, the battle can be especially challenging. If we give in to hurtful desire, the results can be devastating.

Author P. D. Mehta wrote: “A vast amount of suffering is due to our own lust, to our feverish pleasure-seeking and self-indulgence, to our greed and our ambition.” Cravings and addictions of all kinds—alcohol, drugs, gambling, sex, and so on—have ruined many “respectable citizens” and have brought suffering to their family, friends, and others. In view of mankind’s imperfect nature, we have to agree when the Bible says: “It is plain to anyone with eyes to see that at the present time all created life groans in a sort of universal travail.”—Romans 8:22, *The New Testament in Modern English*, by J. B. Phillips.

■ POWER OF WICKED SPIRITS

The Bible reveals that Satan is “the god of this system of things” and that he is joined by powerful wicked spirits called demons.
—2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 12:9.

Like Satan, the demons are actively engaged in controlling and misleading people. The apostle Paul acknowledged this when he said: “We have a wrestling, not against blood and flesh, but against the governments, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places.”
—Ephesians 6:12.

While the demons delight in harassing people, that is not their primary goal. They desire to turn people away from the Most High God, Jehovah. (Psalm 83:18) Practices such as astrology, magic, sorcery, and fortune-telling are just some of the devices that the demons use to deceive and control people. That is why Jehovah alerts us to those dangers and offers protection to all who oppose Satan and the demons.—James 4:7.

■ WE ARE LIVING IN “THE LAST DAYS”

Some two thousand years ago, the Bible foretold: “Know this, that in the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here.”

Pointing out what makes the times critical, it goes on to say: “For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, . . . having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God.” Surely a key reason for all the suffering we see today is that we are living in “the last days.”—2 Timothy 3:1-4.

In view of the factors we have considered, is it not clear why humans are unable to put an end to suffering, despite their good intentions? Where, then, can we turn for help? We must look to our Creator, who has promised to “break up the works of the Devil” and his followers. (1 John 3:8) The following article will consider what God will do to eliminate all causes of suffering.

The End of Suffering Is at Hand!

Imagine living in a world free of suffering—a world without crime, warfare, sickness, and natural disasters. Imagine waking up every morning without having to worry about discrimination, oppression, or economic uncertainty. Does all of this sound too good to be true? Granted, no human or man-made organization can bring about such conditions. But God has promised to do away with all causes of human suffering, including those discussed in the preceding article. Note the following promises from God’s Word, the Bible:

■ THE RULE OF GOOD GOVERNMENT

“The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. And the kingdom itself will not be passed on to any other people. It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite.” —Daniel 2:44.

The Kingdom of God is a heavenly government. Its chosen Ruler, Jesus Christ, will take the place of all human rulership and will ensure that God’s will is done not only in heaven but also here on earth. (Matthew 6:9, 10) This government will not be replaced by any human government because it is “the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Lasting peace will be assured.—2 Peter 1:11.

■ NO MORE FALSE RELIGION

“Satan himself keeps transforming himself into an angel of light. It is therefore nothing great if his ministers also keep transforming

themselves into ministers of righteousness. But their end shall be according to their works.” —2 Corinthians 11:14, 15.

False religion will be exposed as the work of the Devil and will be eliminated from the earth. Gone will be all religious bigotry and bloodshed. This will allow all lovers of the “living and true God” to worship him in “one faith” and “with spirit and truth.” What peace and unity!—1 Thesalonians 1:9; Ephesians 4:5; John 4:23.

■ HUMAN IMPERFECTION WILL BE NO MORE

“God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.”—Revelation 21:3, 4.

Jehovah God makes this possible by means of his Son, Jesus, who gave his life for the world of mankind. (John 3:16) Under Jesus’ direction, humankind will be brought to perfection. There will



no longer be any suffering because “God himself will be with them” and will erase “every tear from their eyes.” Human imperfection and suffering will soon be a thing of the past; “the righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it.”—Psalm 37:29.

■ **WICKED SPIRITS WILL BE GONE**

“He [Jesus Christ] seized the dragon, the original serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. And he hurled him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, that he might not mislead the nations anymore.”—Revelation 20:2, 3.

All satanic influence will be gone when Satan and the demons are bound and hurled into “the abyss,” a state of total inactivity. They will no longer exercise their evil control over human affairs. What a relief it will be to live in a world free from the influence of Satan and the wicked spirits!

■ **“THE LAST DAYS” WILL BE OVER**

“The last days” will end with what Jesus called the “great tribulation.” He said: “Then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world’s beginning until now, no, nor will occur again.”—Matthew 24:21.

The tribulation will be great in the sense that unprecedented calamities will occur. These will climax at “the war of the great day of God the Almighty,” better known as “Armageddon.”—Revelation 16:14, 16, footnote.

People everywhere who love what is right look forward to the end of this wicked system of things. Consider just a few of the blessings that await them under God’s Kingdom.

GOD WILL DO EVEN MORE!

“A great crowd” will be preserved into a peaceful new world: God’s Word says that an un-

numbered “great crowd” of people will “come out of the great tribulation” and be preserved alive into a righteous new world. (Revelation 7:9, 10, 14; 2 Peter 3:13) They will attribute their salvation to Jesus Christ, “the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.”—John 1:29.

Great benefits will come from divine education: In the new world, “the earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah.” (Isaiah 11:9) This divine education will include instruction on how to live in peace with all people and in harmony with the environment. God promises: “I, Jehovah, am your God, the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One causing you to tread in the way in which you should walk.”—Isaiah 48:17.

Dead loved ones will be raised from the grave: While on earth, Jesus raised his friend Lazarus from the dead. (John 11:1, 5, 38-44) Thus he demonstrated what he will do on a much larger scale under God’s Kingdom arrangement.—John 5:28, 29.

Peace and righteousness will prevail forever: Under Christ’s rulership, lawlessness will be a thing of the past. How do we know that? Because Jesus is able to read hearts, and he will use that ability to judge between the righteous and the wicked. Those who refuse to change their wicked ways will not be allowed to live in God’s new world.—Psalm 37:9, 10; Isaiah 11:3, 4; 65:20; Matthew 9:4.

We have considered just a few of the many Bible prophecies that point to the wonderful time to come. When God’s Kingdom exercises rulership over the earth, an “abundance of peace” will prevail forever. (Psalm 37:11, 29) All the causes of pain and suffering that have plagued mankind will be undone. We have God’s own word on it: “Look! I am making all things new. . . . These words are faithful and true.”—Revelation 21:5. ■