

CHANGE HAPPENS

by Mark Huey

Perhaps one of the many benefits of the physical maturation process is the blessing that over time, we gain some wisdom and perspective on what is happening in the dynamic world that humanity dominates. This sagacious understanding is particularly useful when dramatic, seemingly unrelated changes, are occupying an increasing amount of thoughts, conversations, and especially the prayers of those who call upon the God of Creation. Thankfully for the faithful, there are abundant examples of previous sojourners who have left their musings to and about our Creator, which can encourage Believers as contemporary issues arise. After all, despite the fact that change is inevitable and literally embedded in His Creation, the Almighty One who does not change resides and reigns beyond the influence of the time, space, and matter that He created.

The Apostle Paul understood and related the changes transpiring in his First Century world. He said “that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose” (Romans 8:28). This axiom applied two millennia ago still applies today, as Paul was simply reiterating principles about God’s sovereign hand upon the affairs of mankind, which were communicated by his predecessors in the Tanakh. Historically speaking, Paul’s era shortly after the ministry and sacrificial work of Messiah Yeshua, was when the good news of the risen Redeemer was first proclaimed. The opposition to this revelation brought forth persecution, trials, and tribulation that most modern-day Believers in the Western world can hardly imagine. Knowing about crucifixions, people burning at the stake or being fed to lions, beheadings, and mass murders for refusing to bow to Caesar—seem somewhat foreign to most of us, even if those accounts have been read and studied.

Within the larger scope of Paul’s words, we see that he not only understood the failings of the created order caused by human sin, but also that God had providentially ordained all that was happening—and by extension because He does not change (Malachi 3:6), all that will happen in the future:

“For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of* God. And we know

that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified” (Romans 8:19-30).

Reflecting upon this passage of Scripture after nearly two millennia of human activity, reminds Believers that the corrupted Creation, even today, continues to anxiously await the fuller revelation of the sons and daughters of God. For those born from above with the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, who Himself confirms these truths revealed in the Bible, the recognition is that heartfelt groans not only plead for the resurrected hope that is within us (Colossians 1:27)—but also for knowledge and peace during tumultuous times of change. This passage concludes that *every Believer* is called by the Lord for a specific, ordained purpose by Him. **Not a single one of us who loves God gets a simple pass on being one of His children—without the responsibility of living out His call to be justified and glorified.** Hopefully, as one has matured in his or her walk with the Messiah, this reality has become evident. If it has not yet been seen in your life, *it is suggested that groaning supplication be initiated!*

Down through the ages since Paul’s admonition to the Romans was penned, there have been millions of manifestations of God’s glory evidenced through the saints who have lived prior to our own time. Classic works like *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* have recorded for posterity’s sake, the testimonies of faithful followers of the Messiah who have willingly perished for the sake of the gospel. Reading these kinds of testimonies, or returning to the Scriptures to re-read various accounts about the faithful who are recorded in places like the Hebrews 11 “Hall of Faith,” can be very helpful and sobering. We need to do this when confronting current change, and the potential turmoil that can ensue. Obviously, these are in many cases some extreme examples of change and how various people have faithfully handled it in their eras. **I do not propose that we are at a point where extreme circumstances are occurring or even imminent,** but in lieu of the current changes taking place in the created order, reflecting on how our predecessors in the faith dealt with change can be instructional and beneficial.

Another forerunner in the faith who lived through some chaotic times of change, and left us with a legacy to benefit from, is the Prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a prophet to the Southern Kingdom of Judah who prophesied from approximately 625-586 B.C.E. It was during this time that he warned the Jewish people about God’s impending judgment by the Babylonians. Having knowledge of how the Assyrians had been used to previously judge the Northern Kingdom of Israel, brings comparative analysis and context into many of his declarations.

For our future edification and meditation, Jeremiah was not only able to prophesy about the Babylonian captivity, but he also lived long enough to reflect back on the traumatic judgments after they occurred. The Book of Lamentations, composed by either him or his scribe Baruch, describes in graphic detail many of the sufferings and afflictions that befell Jerusalem during the siege and destruction. However, in light of the grander design laid out by the Father, the wisdom

acquired by the aging process allowed Jeremiah to better comprehend and accept change in his lifetime. There is one passage in Lamentations 3 that describes, despite the sometimes tragic consequences of change in the human condition and circumstances, the unchanging nature of God and our need to keep our hope in Him:

“Remember my affliction and my wandering, the wormwood and bitterness. Surely my soul remembers and is bowed down within me. **This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. The LORD's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. The LORD is my portion,**’ says my soul, **‘Therefore I have hope in Him.** The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him. *It is good that he waits silently for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man that he should bear the yoke in his youth*” (Lamentations 3:19-27).

Here we see a declaration that the mercy and compassion of God never fail. Just like His faithfulness to us, they are new each and every morning. We are exhorted to wait upon the Lord, and reminded that He is good to those who seek Him, while waiting silently for His salvation. What an awesome perspective left by an eyewitness to the destruction of Jerusalem! Declarations about God's unmerited goodness toward His people can *still* be made. Like the saints in Paul's era, we know that Jeremiah was called for a specific task to perform, and he accomplished what he was called to do. Thankfully, his prophecies and actions have been recorded for posterity, so that almost three millennia later, we can be reminded that no matter what changes occur, it is our responsibility to maintain our hope in the Holy One of Israel.

Within the annals of Israel's history, we also see the testimony of the faithful Moses. Moses lived through a period of one of the most dramatic changes in the Bible: the Exodus. Moses was called to lead the Ancient Israelites into Egypt, as God formed them as a nation, giving them His Torah. Gratefully, one psalm attributed to Moses, gives us today a unique peak into how the aged Moses (nearly 120 years) obviously gained wisdom and understanding about how God interacts with man. Notice that Moses, just as we see in Lamentations, has wondrous thoughts about God's unchanging ways and consistency:

“A Prayer of Moses, the man of God. Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. You turn man back into dust and say, ‘Return, O children of men.’ For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or *as a watch in the night*. You have swept them away like a flood, they fall asleep; in the morning they are like grass which sprouts anew. In the morning it flourishes and sprouts anew; toward evening it fades and withers away. For we have been consumed by Your anger and by Your wrath we have been dismayed. You have placed our iniquities before You, our secret *sins* in the light of Your presence. For all our days have declined in Your fury; we have finished our years like a sigh. As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years, yet their pride is *but* labor and sorrow; For soon it is gone and we fly away. Who understands the power of Your anger and Your fury, according to the fear that is due You? So

teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom. Do return, O LORD; how long *will it be?* And be sorry for Your servants. O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. **Make us glad according to the days You have afflicted us, and the years we have seen evil.** Let Your work appear to Your servants and Your majesty to their children. Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us; and confirm for us the work of our hands; Yes, confirm the work of our hands” (Psalm 90:1-17).

Moses takes a much more corporate approach than Paul or Jeremiah, by reviewing the changes that took place with the Ancient Israelites during his time as their shepherd. Moses certainly knows about God’s eternal nature and sovereign rule over Creation. He also acknowledges the iniquities of his generation before God. However, there is still the ancient reminder that God’s immutable attributes of lovingkindness and mercy still prevail. The final plea from Moses to God is that he simply asks for not only His continued favor, but that the works of the Israelites would be confirmed. Now looking at these words many millennia later, **we can have confirmation that God allowed all which transpired upon Israel to take place for a sovereign purpose.**

While there are countless examples of God’s faithfulness and providence to His chosen people—beyond the testimonies of Moses, Jeremiah, and Paul—in times of extreme change, it is critical for us today, entering another period of intense change, to not lose hope. Each of these examples remind us **that our hope needs to always rest upon the Holy One who does not change!** As the Prophet Isaiah stated it to his generation:

“The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You. Trust in the LORD forever, for in GOD the LORD, *we have* an everlasting Rock” (Isaiah 26: 3-4).

While Yeshua Himself promised to send us the Holy Spirit after His departure (John 14:26; 15:26), it would be a mistake for us to think that the Holy Spirit is the *only thing* Yeshua has given us. Yeshua left behind a significant example of what it means to serve, as He left His exalted glory in Heaven, living among us as a human, only to be exalted to the Father’s right hand as LORD (Philippians 2:5-11; cf. Isaiah 45:23). The Apostle Paul said, “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Messiah Yeshua” (Philippians 2:5). What Yeshua has done for us is what Believers today should be focusing upon, as change increasingly becomes the mantra of the age and we are called to function as His people via self-sacrifice. The author of Hebrews further describes,

“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **fixing our eyes on Yeshua, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.** For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, ‘MY SON, DO NOT REGARD

LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES' [Proverbs 3:11-12]" (Hebrews 12:1-6).

The author of Hebrews foresaw that some difficult times were in store for the First Century Believers. Simply because we live in the Twenty-First Century, does not mean that we are immune to similar problems. We have the testimony of faithful saints given to us in the Scriptures, to cause us to realize that we are not alone in our struggles. Yeshua Himself gave up everything so that we might have eternal salvation! So as we consider what may lie ahead, ask yourself some of these questions:

- How am I handling these changing times?
- Will I be able to look back upon my individual walk of faith, and corporate walk of faith with other Believers, giving thanks for God's faithfulness to me—despite whatever changes have taken place during my life?
- Am I maturing by consistently staying in the Word, allowing the groaning of the Holy Spirit to not only plead for grace and understanding, but also to teach me in all His ways (John 14:26)?
- Am I faithfully confessing my sins and keeping my accounts minimal before the Holy One of Israel (1 John 1:8)?
- Do I recognize and embrace the call that is upon my life, to be a representative for the Almighty in this generation (Romans 8)?
- Am I ready, willing, and able to aptly declare the hope that is within me (Colossians 1:24-29)?
- As a Messianic Believer, am I learning and incorporating more of what it means to be a Spirit-led, Torah obedient follower of Messiah Yeshua?
- Am I convinced that as I mature and age, that I am being conformed more into the image of the Messiah (Romans 8:29)?

As you have read through the above list, these are probing questions—which hopefully have caused you to ask more questions about your personal and corporate walk with God. They should cause you to wonder where you stand before Him. No matter when in time you are called to exist in His created order, change is just a part of what is to be expected. How one handles change is asked by Him of every generation, **yet it is critical to always acknowledge and understand that the Lord does not change.** Malachi, the last recognized prophet of the Tanakh, confesses this truth as he admonished his generation to turn back to the Lord from their errant ways:

“Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘For I, the LORD, do not change, therefore you, O sons of Jacob,

are not consumed. From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept *them*. Return to Me, and I will return to you,' says the LORD of hosts. 'But you say, "How shall we return?"'" (Malachi 3:5-7).

In Malachi's day, just like in every generation, God's judgment is often a result of oppressive changes in the culture. But God does not change and He promises to preserve those of His people who faithfully serve Him. In Malachi we see that as some turned away from walking in the ways of the Lord, many began to cry out, "How shall we return?" This was God's answer to Malachi's generation:

"Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, "How have we robbed You?" In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation *of you!* Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,' says the LORD of hosts, 'if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast *its grapes*,' says the LORD of hosts. 'All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,' says the LORD of hosts. 'Your words have been arrogant against Me,' says the LORD. 'Yet you say, "What have we spoken against You?" You have said, "It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the LORD of hosts? So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up but they also test God and escape.'" **Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name.** 'They will be Mine,' says the LORD of hosts, 'on the day that I prepare *My* own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.' So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him" (Malachi 3:7-18).

The Prophet Malachi, speaking the words of the Lord, rebuked his generation for not following in the ways of the Lord. Perhaps one of the most condemning statements in this prophecy is seen when the people speak about the vanity of serving God. Their view was that the arrogant and wicked are blessed and prosperous, because they have not been judged by God. *How short sighted can this perspective actually be?* Those who truly feared the Lord were given a book of remembrance to recall to their attention that they would be spared from His judgment. It should make us consider the Book of Life seen in Revelation, which ultimately recalls who will enter into eternity with Him, and who will not (Revelation 20:15). Our reaction to the inevitable changes that come to our world should cause us to draw closer to Him, and not farther away.

The testimonies of dealing with the inevitability of change for humanity, versus the consistency of our God, are replete in the Holy Writ. As each of us ages and continues to review various passages from Scripture, comparing them with what is happening in the here and now, **we should be encouraged** and not discouraged when change happens. His mercies are new each morning! His lovingkindness for the people who serve Him is consistent! The Lord continues to confirm the work of our hands and hearts, as we step out in faith to walk in the

good works He has prepared for us (Ephesians 2:10). He has called us for a time such as this, in this generation, with all of the changes that are about to take place! *Take advantage of the opportunities He has provided for us.*

Let us joyfully serve Him in spite of any of the changes our world may experience, recognizing that He can use the circumstances of today's world to draw people to Himself. Regardless of what happens, it is still His Creation and it is still His plan for the ages. Any unwillingness to serve God in what He is doing can result in His people being ineffective and not fulfilling the call that He has placed upon us. We must keep our hearts and minds stayed upon the Rock, and place our eyes firmly upon Yeshua in all our endeavors!

In each one of your lives, I pray that our Heavenly Father has already orchestrated the most important change that any of us can ever experience: that is the change of a heart of stone into a heart of flesh, empowered by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:26). **This is a change that will remain beyond all of the other changes that God just might use to bring about this ultimate saving change.** If you have not experienced this change, then make sure that you have. And if you have already experienced this change, then commit yourself to being a useful vessel in His work—as some plant and some water, but it is always God who causes the growth *or change* (1 Corinthians 3:7).

Thankfully, redeeming change happens to hearts of stone!