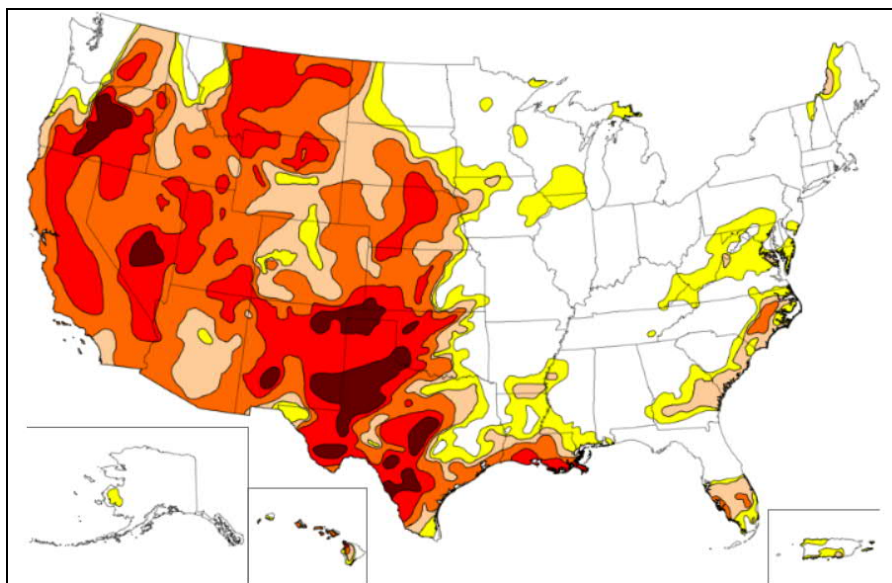


## SABBATH THOUGHT 2022-04-30—PHYSICAL HEALING

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

I was looking at a map of the USA recently that shows the entire western half of the country in a moderate to severe drought. The eastern boundary includes Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and parts of North Dakota. From those states, it extends all the way to the west coast. Only the western portions of the state of Washington escape it.



This got me to thinking that all that rain must be going somewhere. The earth is, at least in terms of water, a closed system (in engineering terms). That means that the total amount of water on the earth rain never changes; therefore, a drought in the USA might indicate flooding somewhere else. However, a map showed a worldwide drought in varying degrees. It includes southern Europe, large parts of Africa, the Middle East, all but the eastern-most areas of China and Australia, all of Melanesia (the island nations north and east of Australia), and the majority of South America outside of the Amazon River basin. The bottom line is that the only places with normal rainfall are eastern USA, Canada, northern and eastern Europe, and Russia. Oddly enough, I could not any find regions with above average rainfall that would offset the dry conditions currently impacting most of the world.

Periods of drought have occurred for millennia. One during Abram's time forced him to move to Egypt due to lack of food (Gen. 12:10). The same thing happened to his son Isaac when he was forced to move south to the land of the Philistines in Gerar (Gen. 26:1). Even Jacob did not escape a severe seven year famine. The people only survived because his son Joseph planned for it. Others that lived through droughts included Ruth (Ruth 1:1), David (2 Sam 21:1), Elijah (1 Kings 18:2), to name a few.

It is common to think of drought as punishment from God, but was that the case with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or even David? Perhaps the nations around them were targeted, but drought has occurred periodically throughout the ages and afflicts God's people as well as unbelievers. Regardless of whether or not they were punishments of God, the world has always had cycles of plenty followed by times of extreme want.

We are entering one such time today and it is likely going to get worse. But there is one thing of which God takes an accounting during any lean times: whether or not His people turn to Him. Solomon, in the beginning of his reign, petitioned God to **always** listen to His people when they prayed for relief from drought—and God heard his prayer:

1 KINGS 8:37-39, 9:3 **If there is famine in the land**, if there is plague, blasting, mildew, locusts; if there are stripping locusts; if their enemy encircles them in the land of their cities, whatever plague, whatever sickness, 38 **Any prayer, any supplication from any man of all Your people** Israel, who shall each know the plague of his own heart, and shall spread forth his hands toward this house, 39 **Then hear in heaven Your dwelling place and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to all his ways**, whose heart You know; for You, You only, know the hearts of all the children of men. ... 9:3 And **the LORD said to him, "I have heard your prayer** and your cry which you have made before Me.

Drought is, perhaps, one of the most destructive curses of the earth. It is usually widespread resulting in failed crops, dead herds and flocks, extreme heat, dust storms, high winds, and consuming fires—and there is nothing man can do can stop it. It can kill both man and beast from lack of food and water. No one can survive a drought if it lasts long enough. Even underground water needs to be replenished with rain so wells dry up. This happened once to people I know. Have you seen the heart-wrenching scenes of people in Africa starving to death? People have committed heinous acts when driven by unimaginable hunger and thirst (2 Kings 6:25-30). Worst of all, those who linger past a certain point cannot be saved even if the drought lifts or supplies of food and water arrive. It is a terrible way to die.

So why am I writing about such depressing and terrible news? First, many believers have suffered with disease and loss over the last two-plus years due to a man-made virus and have become victims of governments that treat their citizenry as slaves and criminals. Second, there are promises of God that we all need to know AND rely upon. The first reason shows that, just like any drought, God's people are not always immune to the curses that come upon the world. However, even though we may be afflicted along with the world, God specifically promises to help His children and set us apart. David wrote of this very important promise:

PSALMS 37:18-20 The LORD knows the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be forever. 19 **They [the saints] shall not be ashamed in**

**the time of evil, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.** 20 But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be like the beauty of pastures—they are consumed, and like smoke they vanish.

Pay particular attention to verse 19 as there are two specific points. First, believers will not be “ashamed in the time of evil”. That time generally points to the Day of the Lord; that is, the time of God’s vengeance upon the earth. On a personal level, however, it points to the times of evil that we experience during our lives even if we are not alive at the end of this age. What does it mean to be “ashamed”? In both the Hebrew and Greek, it has a meaning of disappointment or delay. In other words, we will not be disappointed when Jesus returns nor will He delay salvation as emphasized by the eternal inheritance in verse 18. But notice the last part of the verse. God promises that He will provide for us even in famine. The promise of being “satisfied” is a very physical one because we are never in a “spiritual” famine as long as we stay close to God and His word. In fact, “satisfied” literally means to be filled or to have plenty. Filled with what? Food and water. How? Perhaps from a rock as was done for the ancient Israelites.

What is most interesting about these verses is it combines a spiritual promise (“They shall not be ashamed in the time of evil”) with a very physical one (“In the days of famine they shall be satisfied.”) There are many promises of God, especially those for healing, that have both a spiritual and physical fulfillment. But not here. David also recorded the same promise in an earlier Psalm:

PSALMS 33:18-22 Behold, **the eye of the LORD is upon those who fear Him**, upon those who hope in His lovingkindness, 19 **To deliver their soul from [eternal] death and to keep them alive in famine.** 20 Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield, 21 For our heart shall rejoice in Him because we have trusted in His holy name. 22 Let Your lovingkindness, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in You.

Solomon prayed that God would always help His children when they pray in their time of need. Recall the words. He asked God to hear “**any** prayer” from “**any** [person] of **all** your people” and then to “give to **every** [person] according to [their] needs.” Do we believe in God’s physical promises as assuredly as we believe in the spiritual ones? This is a very important question each of us should consider.

At times, it is easier to believe in spiritual promises than physical ones. There can be several reasons, I think. Perhaps the most common is time. If we ask God for healing and it is not immediate, then we might not see God’s hand if it takes time to recover. We might question it because we assume God’s healing is always immediate and whole. But is that always the case? When Hezekiah was sick unto death, he asked “What shall be the sign that the LORD will heal me?” (2 Kings 20:8). We, who have never had a true prophet of God speak to us, might accuse Hezekiah of faithlessness. But this could be us,

too. When we ask God for healing, do we need a sign? Do we believe that God will answer our prayer? If it takes weeks or months, do we feel abandoned?

Another reason we might not expect God to heal us is the story of Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7-10). God flatly told him "no." Do we use this as an example of why we might not be healed? "Sometimes the answer is no," we tell ourselves and in the process convince ourselves that God will likely not heal us.

Even if a healing required time, we have a choice—we can believe God truly healed us...or not. We can have faith that God will answer our pray with "yes"...or not. These are important choices and they can affect our faith. We can **choose** to believe that every day we are alive it is because God sustains each and every one of us PERSONALLY. We can **choose** to believe that God's answer to our prayers is "yes." Making these choices aligns with the very powerful faith of Jesus Christ in us (Rev. 14:12).

Choosing to believe that God will heal us physically no matter how long it takes and regardless of how great our doubt might be is the way to greater faith as well. Remember the man whose son was possessed (Mark 9:17-27)? Jesus asked him if he believed He could heal him and he said, "Lord, I believe. **Help my unbelief.**" Many of us feel this way at times; however, always remember that Jesus **did** indeed heal the man's son in spite of his admitted unbelief! So, just because our faith is not enough to move a mountain does not mean that God will say "no" or refuse to heal us. Quite the opposite! The vital thing to remember is that the man BELIEVED that Jesus would heal his son and He did! In other words, the man did not make excuses. He asked in complete humility and Jesus healed his son. He did not say that Jesus will likely say no or this is just my burden to bear. I think many of us have fallen into this way of thinking, myself included.

This is not to say that God never says "no" but I believe that it is a rare occurrence for anyone who sincerely and continually asks for healing. I encourage you to read Matthew 6:8, 25-34 because God has promised to care for us when we put Him first in our lives. There are also situations when we must endure things for awhile. Even so, God promises He will make certain we can bear it. In the following scripture, I replaced the word "tempt" with *test*, because that is what it means in the Greek:

1 CORINTHIANS 10:9, 13 Neither should we [*test*] Christ, as some of them also [*tested*] Him, and were killed by serpents. ... 13 No [*test*] has come upon you except what is common to mankind. For **God, Who is faithful, will not permit you to be [*tested*] beyond what you are able to bear**; but with the [*test*], He will make a way of escape, so that you may be able to bear *it*.

Do you believe that God **will not permit** you to be tested beyond what you can endure but will make a way to bear it? The word "not" in this sentence is the strongest Greek negative meaning it cannot ever happen; therefore, God guarantees it!

So, God has given us promises of help and healing that apply to our lives TODAY. Call upon God with a humble and contrite heart and EXPECT Him to provide for your needs. Only be surprised if He does **not** heal you or supply the physical things of this life!

Finally, dear brethren, remember to always give thanks and praise to God especially when you receive the answer to your prayers. While He knows what is in your hearts, He desires to hear it from **you** personally as a “sacrifice of praise continually to God ... with the fruit of our lips” (Heb. 13:15).

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

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