

Prosperity is God's Plan for 2022

“...plans to prosper you...”

Here we are at the beginning of another calendar year, where it is customary for people to offer new year's greetings, well wishes or suggestions for a successful year. My email inbox is filled with financial gurus offering their ideas and franchised plans for prosperity in 2022.

The prophet Jeremiah famously quoted the Lord God to the Hebrews about his prosperity plan for his people:

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jer. 29:11, NIV).

Happy, Holy and Healthy

The root Hebrew word translated in the Old Testament as “prosperity” can also have several alternate translations to suggest “safety, wellness, happiness, healthiness, and peace.” If we are faithful followers in our pathway of discipleship, we can expect to prosper in all the dimensions the word means. God's bounty of blessings flows toward His sacrificial, self-giving servants at their points of need.

“But my God shall supply your every need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19, MEV).

All emotional, physical, spiritual and material blessings we may receive by God's gracious hand are to be stewarded and shared so that other believers may bless still others as the “hands of God.” All promises and provisions of God require responsible actions on the part of those who would serve Him.

Such servants are God's own blood-bought and adopted children,

who He desires to be happy, holy and healthy.

Blessed to be a Blessing

From Genesis to Revelation in the Bible, we find examples of how God's people are blessed in order to be a blessing to others.

Our Creator God placed human beings on this specially designed planet Earth, which Christian apologist Hugh Ross, from *Reasons to Believe*, explains is "located in a just-right location within a just-right galaxy (here) in a just-right universe (here) that operates under the just-right laws of physics (here).

[Ross capably discusses these subjects in *An Introduction and Summary of the Evidence for the Existence of God from Design here*].

In Genesis 12, God chose Abram to be the "father of a great nation." Then, in verses 2-3, God described the destiny before him:

"I will make of you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless them who bless you and curse him who curses you and in you, all families of the earth will be blessed."

This "Abrahamic Covenant" became foundational to all other promises to the patriarchal family and the tribes of peoples they became. The promised blessings flowed to each of them as they obeyed the "" conditional requirements.

In the New Covenant or "New Testament," the apostle Paul taught believers in Galatia (part of Turkey today) that Jesus is the Christ, the Seed of Abraham, who fulfills the Law and the promises to Abraham:

"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us—as it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who

hangs on a tree' that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

"Brothers, I am speaking in human terms: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is ratified, no one annuls or adds to it. Now the promises were made to Abraham and his Seed. He does not say, 'and to seeds,' meaning many, but 'and to your Seed,' meaning one, who is Christ" (Gal. 3:13-16).

So, if we are "in Christ," God no longer sees our sins and unrighteous imperfections, needing to be temporarily atoned for by animals. Instead, He sees the righteousness of His own Son and His sacrifice on the cross, completely atoning for our sins (Eph. 2:13; Heb. 8:12). Not only is our sin debt canceled but its record is also blotted out and "nailed to the cross" (Col. 2:13-15). Our relationship with God is fully restored (John 3:16-17; 20:31) and His promises of blessing now include us.

God Intends Prosperity for Us in 2022

As we said above, God's larger sense of "prosperity" is to enable us to be "happy, holy and healthy" (cp. Psalm 35:27). It is disingenuous to imply that financial prosperity is God's highest intention for any of us. Rather, God wants His children to have "treasure in heaven" by taking up the cross of discipleship here on earth (Mark 10:17-27).

Part of discipleship is learning to interpret Scripture faithfully. Some modern-day teachers mistakenly teach 3 John 2 from the King James Version as though it is a promise of financial prosperity from God, Himself.

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (3 John 2, KJV).

The context shows God is not the one speaking in this often-quoted passage. Instead, this is part of the opening

salutation in the apostle Paul's brief letter to his friend Gaius. Paul was merely wishing Gaius good health as a gracious beginning of the letter. This verse is not a universal promise of God for the wealth and health of all believers and at all times.

Even the apostle Paul said, "I have learned in whatever state I am to be content. I know both how to face humble circumstances and how to have abundance. Everywhere and in all things I have learned the secret, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things because of Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:11-13, MEV).

Have a "happy, holy and healthy" new year! {eoa}

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