

This, Too, Shall Pass

No doubt, we can all agree that 2020 has been a year like no other, and it will be nice to see it in the rearview mirror.

It has been a chaotic year in many respects – record number of hurricanes, tornadoes that delivered heartbreaking loss of lives and destruction of property, wildfires, domestic terrorism, and, of course, the coronavirus pandemic. Very likely, particularly with regard to COVID-19, you've said or thought, *this too shall pass*. I certainly have.

It is a statement that reflects the temporary nature of the human condition. Many believe the phrase "*this too shall pass*" appears in the Bible, and I thought so for a time. However, that is not the case, although several Scripture verses contain the thought.

An early English citation of the phrase appeared in 1848: "When an Eastern sage was desired by his sultan to inscribe on a ring the sentiment which, amidst the perpetual change of human affairs, was most descriptive of their real tendency, he engraved on it the words: 'And this, too, shall pass away.' It is impossible to imagine a thought more truly and universally applicable to human affairs than that expressed in these memorable words."

Abraham Lincoln employed the phrase in a speech on Sept. 30, 1859, before he became the 16th President of the United States: "It is said an Eastern monarch once charged his wise men to invent him a sentence, to be ever in view, and which should be true and appropriate in all times and situations. They presented him the words: 'And this, too, shall pass away.' How much it expresses! How chastening in the hour of pride! How comforting in the depths of affliction!"

The prophet Isaiah warned the people of Israel that because of their sin – disobedience to God and worshiping false idols – they faced certain judgment and discipline. Jerusalem would be destroyed, and many Israelites would be taken captive to Babylon for a period of 70 years. Isaiah promised, however, that a faithful God would deliver them. The prophet told the people they should "be glad and rejoice," knowing their present state would not be the end. Like a child who anticipates Christmas, the people could be eager with anticipation about what God would one day accomplish.

Through Isaiah, God promised to "create a new heaven and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind."

In effect, Isaiah was saying: This, too, shall pass. And as Isaiah encouraged his audiences, we today can be glad and rejoice for what a loving God will accomplish in our lives. The Apostle Paul tells us:

(more)

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:17-18 NKJV).

As the calendar turns to 2021, believers can draw peace and comfort from these promises of God. Hope in the future gives strength for the present.

– Beecher Hunter

