

What is This World Coming To?



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Chapter 1

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The brutal terrorist attacks on the U.S. World Trade Center and Pentagon buildings were like thunderclaps of a gathering storm—such as there never was. What do these and other ominous rumblings of society portend? Is there any hope for the world on the other side of this trouble which will certainly climax in a furious storm?

After the cold war ended with the collapse of communism, Third World Nations became armed camps of instability that pose a continual threat to world peace. The United States entered the new millennium with a record debt and a staggering world recession. Of the world's 6 billion people, 1.3 billion live in poverty on \$1 a day or less, and 1.1 billion are malnourished. Hunger and starvation shape their lives. Thousands more eat canned pet food. Three million Americans live on the streets. The top ten billionaires have wealth equivalent to the rest of the world according to the U.N. Human Development Report, 1998.

Most historians now agree that since World War I our world has been coming to an end. Not the destruction of the planet earth, but the end of our social order—our civilization. Rowse states, “If ever there was a year that marked the end of an era and the beginning of another, it was 1914. That year brought to an end the old world with its sense of security and began a modern age whose chief characteristic

is insecurity on a daily basis.” (Rowse, *Oxford Historian and Biographer*, June 28, 1959.)

From 1914 to 1918, World War I shook Europe to its foundations. The 1920s witnessed the overthrow or demise in power of the centuries-old church-state ruling houses of Europe, in which kings claimed to rule by “divine right.” The Thirties offered the Great Depression; the Forties, World War II. The Fifties saw the communist takeover of more than one third of the world, while the Sixties were terrorized by race riots and the youth revolt.

In the Seventies, corruption in government reached its zenith with the forced resignation of Vice President Agnew and then President Nixon. Crime and violence continued to spiral. The sex revolution began the eroding of long accepted moral standards of our society. The Eighties became the “decade of greed.” Junk bond manipulation, S&L corruption and bank mismanagement helped bring the economy to a grinding halt. These combined with the AIDS time bomb and the pollution countdown made the 1990s a “decade of uncertainty.”

Is it any wonder so many ask, “What is this world coming to?” Some reason further, “If there is a God who cares, why does He permit all of this trouble, evil and suffering?” Not finding reliable answers to this question, many have abandoned religion.

Growing Materialism...Shrinking Faith

The failure of traditional churches to answer the many questions facing modern man has divided the western world into two camps—the non-religious “materialist camp” and the religious “Christian camp.” The materialist camp is composed of atheists, agnostics, humanists, and existentialists. Materialists like to think that observable facts and provable theories are the only bases of their thoughts and actions. But as William James, the noted philosopher, observed, all materialists have one thing in common with the Christian—and that is faith. An atheist cannot deny the existence of God by scientific fact and, therefore, must assume his premise by faith. The agnostic accepts the premise that there are many concepts that cannot be proven, but even his premise is unprovable. All schools of philosophy are based on faith.

Though the Christian camp can agree that there is a God, Christians disagree on almost everything else. No doubt, this fact is one reason so many have joined the materialist camp today. Space-age man—staggered by the complexity of the universe—complains that he is “turned off” by the traditional churches when he receives religious answers that are museum pieces from the “Middle Ages.” To modern religious groups like Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, etc., the materialist cries, “Your God is too small!” as they seem to imply that only their group will be saved. Thank God, His love is broad enough to include everyone—Catholic and Protestant, the modern religionist as well as the materialist.

Lacking an explanation and solution to man’s dilemma, the materialist taunts the Christian camp to come up with answers. Unfortunately, most Christians are unable to meet the challenge. However, there have been notable exceptions. Since the late 1800s diligent students of Bible prophecy warned that the Twentieth Century would be devastated by political, social, economic and religious upheavals. This unprecedented trouble would destroy what the Bible refers to the “present evil world” or social order. Galatians 1:4.

A Remarkable Prediction

The August 30, 1914, issue of *The World Magazine* in a feature article about Bible Student predictions reported:



“The terrific war outbreak in Europe has fulfilled an extraordinary prophecy. For 25 years Bible Students have been proclaiming to the world that the Day of Wrath prophesied in the Bible would dawn in 1914.

“The Bible speaks of a “time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation.” This prophecy of Daniel Bible Students identify as the “Day of Wrath,” the “Time of the Lord,” and the so-called “End of the World,” references which are plentiful in the Scriptures.”

How Historians View Current Turmoil

The following is a part of the record:

“Looking back from the vantage point of the present we see that the outbreak of World War I ushered in a twentieth-century “Time of Troubles”...from which our civilization has by no means yet emerged. Directly or indirectly all the convulsions of the last half century stem back to 1914: the two World Wars, the Bolshevik Revolution, the rise and fall of Hitler, the continuing turmoil in the Far and Near East, the power-struggle between the Communist world and our own. More than 23,000,000 deaths can be traced to one or the other of these upheavals...” (Edmond Taylor, *The Fall of Dynasties*, Doubleday, N.Y., 1963, p. 16.)

“A world mesmerized by Science and Progress mocked the mysticism of religious sects which had long predicted that the world would end in the year 1914; fifty years later the world isn’t so sure that it didn’t end in 1914...” (*The Great Ideas Today*, 1963, Britannica Great Books, Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., pp. 107, 108.)

Historians mark 1914 as the ending of a world. The convulsions since are both the processes of its disintegration and the birth pangs of a new world. Britannica editors, as noted, observed that a religious group (actually known as Bible Students) predicted 1914 would mark the ending of a world in just this manner.

Thus, whatever this world is coming to, assurance and even comfort lie in knowing that the Word of God predicted today’s phenomenal happenings beforehand.

Chapter 2

Today's Headlines Written Nearly 2,000 Years Ago



Many Bible prophecies predict the conditions and events of our day as signs of the end of the world—today's headlines written nearly 2,000 years ago. Consideration of these prophecies establishes: (1) that the Bible is indeed the inspired Word of God; (2) that we are living in unprecedented times prophesied in Scripture as the “end of the world”; and (3) that man is standing at the threshold of *lasting peace* and *economic security* in a *pollution-free earth*.

Daniel 12:1 and 4 give four signs that mark the “time of the end,” or end of the world:

1. A time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation;
2. Many shall run to and fro;
3. Knowledge shall be increased; and
4. Your (Daniel's) people (Israel) delivered.

Unprecedented Trouble—Daniel 12:1

That the first sign, unprecedented trouble, is the hallmark of our time is confirmed by historians. True, the world has always had trouble, but never before has it been in such staggering proportions.

Wars: In the 20th Century over 100 million lives were lost through war. From 1990 to 1995, 70 states involved in 93 wars killed 5.5 million people. Forty wars were waged in 1999. The unprecedented terrorism of September 11 marked 2001.

In his book *Out of Control*, Zbigniew Brzezinski, former National Security Advisor and professor of American Foreign Policy at John Hopkins University, notes that the 20th century began amid great hope and promise, but became the century of insanity. In elaborating on his observation of 175 million slaughtered in the name of the “politics of organized insanity,” he says:

“Contrary to its promise, the twentieth century became mankind's most bloody and hateful century of hallucinatory politics and of monstrous killings. Cruelty was institutionalized to an unprecedented degree, lethality was organized on a mass production basis. The contrast between the scientific potential for good and the political evil that was actually unleashed is shocking. Never before in history was killing so globally pervasive, never before did it consume so many lives, never before was human annihilation pursued with such concentration of sustained effort on behalf of such arrogantly irrational goals.”

The population explosion and industrialization of Third World nations accentuate the oil crunch. Nations will go to war for oil. Many Third World nations have the poor —chemical warfare, and are working on actual nuclear warheads. Such volatile weaponry in the hands of these regimes spells trouble. The economic and political instability of the Soviet Union could result in a military coup.

Population Explosion: Before 1650 A.D. the population doubled every 1,000 years. In 1804 A. D. the population was one billion. It doubled in 1927 (123 years later). And doubled again in 1974 (only 47 years later). In 1990 the world population was 5.5 billion. By 2000 A.D. it increased one billion.

Up to 15 million people die of starvation annually. There are 40 million refugees worldwide and 100 million homeless. Each day 40,000 babies die of starvation in Third World countries, while Americans spend over \$900 million yearly feeding dogs and cats.

Pollution: The U.S. has 4.6 % of the world's population, but annually disposes of 290 million tons of toxic waste, uses 26% of the world's oil, 26% of the world's coal, and 27% of the world's natural gas; releases 26% of the world's nitrogen oxides; and produces 25.5 % of the world's carbon dioxide emissions. Air pollutants from car exhaust and industry spawn disease. Deaths from respiratory disease double every five years. Skin cancer and cataracts caused by ozone depletion are increasing. From 1950 to 1980 melanomas increased by 500%.

Solid wastes, radioactive and toxic chemical wastes are contaminating our rivers, lakes and oceans. In the last 200 years, the U.S. has lost 50% of its wetlands, 90% of its old-growth forests, and 99% of its tall-grass prairie. The world is losing tropical forests at a rate of almost 42 million acres per year, an increase of 50% from a decade ago. At the current rate, tropical forests will be gone within 115 years. Rain forests cover only 7% of Earth's surface, but contain over 50% of its species. Acid rain is destroying our forests, which in turn will produce "global warming."

Global Warming: "Except for nuclear war or a collision with an asteroid, no force has more potential to damage our planet's web of life than global warming." (*Time Magazine*, April 9, 2001) The 1990s were the hottest decade on record. Over the 20th century, Earth's average temperature rose approximately one degree. Warmer climates have widespread effects on the environment.

The sea level will rise as oceans absorb heat from the atmosphere and expand. Polar ice caps

will melt. Increases in sea level will flood and erode coastal areas inhabited by half the world's population. Tropical storms will become more frequent and intense. Weather patterns will become extreme, causing flooding. Soil moisture will decrease impacting crop failures and life-threatening droughts. "Breadbasket farmland" (like our Midwest) will become barren desert. Markets and food supplies will be disrupted. Severe food shortages will result.

Time is running out, according to Lester R. Brown, president of the highly respected Worldwatch Institute. "Preceding generations have always been concerned about the future, but ours is the first to be faced with decisions that will determine whether the earth our children inherit will be inhabitable."

Scientists are now concerned that the population explosion could hasten and increase the effects of global warming. Drastic climate changes resulting in economic disaster in many nations could trigger wars for survival.

Drugs: We are losing the drug war because the huge profits are too corrupting. There are 2.2 million hard-core drug users in the United States. While one out of forty persons in New York City is hard-core, nationally one out of one hundred are hard-core users. The number of casual users is substantially higher. Is it any wonder the crime rate is spiraling? Seventy percent of New York City's drug users are affluent. One thousand drug addicted babies are born every day.

Economic chaos: The U.S. entered 2000 with a staggering debt of \$5.6 trillion and a perilous foreign trade imbalance. The nineties were the "decade of uncertainty." Outstanding consumer credit debts have increased from \$349.4 billion in 1980 to \$1,395.4 billion in 1999.

Indeed, our generation is experiencing a "Time of Trouble such as never was since there was a nation."

Increased Travel—Daniel 12:1

The second sign is increased travel. Transportation has expanded rapidly because of the



automobile. Selden made the first automobile in 1877. Today there are over 600,000,000 cars. Through numerous modes of transportation millions are crossing and recrossing each other's paths around the world. In the past 100 years, man has increased his travel from 30 mph to 25,000 mph off the planet to the moon.

Knowledge Increased—Daniel 12:1

If the increase of knowledge from the dawn of history to the 1880s is given a value of one, then knowledge has doubled 16 times within the last 10 years. One hundred years ago, 90 of the world's population could neither read nor write. Today, 40% of the world's population can read and write, and in the Western world literacy has reached nearly 90%.

Ninety percent of all scientists who have ever lived are alive today. Fifty percent of the world's inventions have been created in the last decade.

Sophistication in communications allows man to see and hear throughout the world instantly. U.S. homes with telephone answering devices jumped from 31% in 1990 to 74% in 2000. Cordless telephones jumped from 25% in 1990 to 78% in 2000. In 1989 there were 3.5 million cellular telephone subscribers; by 1999 there were 86.0 million. In 1990 there were 9.9 million pagers; by 1999 there were 53.5 million.

In 1995, 31.7% households had personal computers; by 2000, 53%. In the last decade, 66.3 million computers were sold. In 1993 there were 3 million Internet users; by mid 1999 there were nearly 200 million; by 2000 there were 332.7 million.

The noted historian, Barbara Tuchman has observed,

“Man entered the Nineteenth Century using only his own and animal power, supplemented by that of wind and water, much as he had entered the Thirteenth, or for that matter, the First. He entered the Twentieth with his capacities in transportation, communication, production, manufacture and weaponry multiplied a thousandfold by the energy of machines.” (The Proud Tower, Foreword, xvi)



Unprecedented travel and increase of knowledge marks our day at the “time of the end.”

Israel Becomes a Nation—Daniel 12:1

The fourth sign which marks us at the “time of the end” is that the Lord will stand up for Daniel's “people,” the Jewish nation. If we are living in this “time of the end,” we should expect dramatic evidence of God's favor on behalf of the Jewish people.

Against this background, Matthew 24 becomes meaningful. “What shall be the sign of your coming [Greek, parousia], and of the end of the world [age]?” Matt. 24:3

Matthew 24:32-34 gives the deliverance of Israel as one of these signs. “Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh: So likewise you, when you shall see all these things, know that it is even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.”

Israel Restored

Students of prophecy from many denominations generally recognize that the fig tree is pictorial of the nation of Israel. (See Jeremiah, Chapter 24). In Matthew 21:19, Jesus cursed a fig tree because he found no fruit on it. As a result of his cursing the fig tree withered.

Several days later Jesus applied the lesson of the withered fig tree. He proclaimed judgment on the nation of Israel, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Matthew 23:38) because it had not borne fruitage to God. Israel was subsequently scattered and persecuted.

Israel's restoration is an outstanding sign of the end of the age. The fig tree coming back to life and putting forth leaves represents Israel coming to life as a nation, and receiving God's increasing favor. Historians agree that Israel's rebirth is a miracle of history. Never before has a nation been destroyed, its people dispersed to the ends of the earth and then-nearly 2,000 years later-its descendants regathered to their homeland and re-established as a nation.

Compare Luke 21:29?32 with Matthew 24:32?34. The restoration of Israel means the kingdom is at hand.

“And he spoke to them a parable: Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, you see and know of your own selves that summer is nigh at hand. So likewise you, when you see these things come to pass, know you that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.” Luke 21:29?32.

The generation that witnesses Israel restored as a nation will also witness the complete end of the world or age, and the full establishment of the Kingdom of God.

Scriptures are charged with signs that have become the headlines of our day: Jerusalem is no longer trodden down by Gentiles (Lk. 21:24). Many new nations have gained independence (Lk. 21:29,30). Evil is exposed as never before (I Cor. 4:5). Most people, even the professedly religious, lack faith (Lk. 18:8). Men love themselves, have no respect for parents, and have no natural affection (2 Tim. 3:1?5). Turmoil grows between labor and capital (Jas. 5:1?4). Wars and war preparations intensify (Joel 3:9?11). All the while men proclaim “peace” (I Thess. 5:2,3). Men’s hearts fail for fear (Lk. 21:36).

One more sign bears consideration.

Nations on the Run— Another Remarkable Prophecy

“Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.” Amos 5:18,19,20

In Amos’ prophecy the fleeing man represents the world’s experiences in this dark “time of trouble.” At the dawning of our era, Great Britain ruled the most expansive empire on earth. The lion in this prophecy, Britain’s national symbol, appropriately illustrated the mighty nation that de-

voured (colonized) weaker nations. Colonialism’s suffocating grasping led to the world’s fleeing to another form of government.

The man in Amos 5:20 escaped the lion only to meet the bear—a form of government diametrically opposed to the grasping greed of colonialism—communism! The former Soviet Union, the “bear” of Amos’ prophecy, offered man another hope for safety in this time of trouble. Communism’s failure to rescue man was underscored by its precipitous fall. Nations are now seeking another hope of security-nationalism.

Entering the “house” of nationalism has been anything but comfortable for the nations of the world. Bosnia, Serbia, Germany and other nations seeking safety in nationalism have suffered civil war, economic malaise, the rise of new “hate groups” and other ills. While in the supposed security of ultra-nationalism (will church and state reunite?) the people place their hand on the wall. Seeking rest in the supporting structure of human government will result in being bitten by the serpent. That old Serpent, the Devil and Satan, which once deceived the nations to think that they were Christ’s Kingdom (Revelation 12:9) will bite them again. Then the nations will feel the rebuke of Jehovah in the great time of trouble.

All of these prophecies mark the time when the present evil world is being destroyed. God is now revealing Himself as never before in history, a revelation which will climax with the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ on earth.

Take heart—even though things must get worse before they get better. It is the unprecedented severity of world problems (Matthew 24:21) and the paralysis of hopelessness (Luke 21:25) that mark us at the threshold of the great Kingdom blessings which God has in store for man.

Just as urban renewal requires the demolition of old structures, so the full establishment of Christ’s Kingdom requires the removal of our corrupt civilization (Hebrews 12:28). The present generation will see the Kingdom in all its glory (Luke 21:21-32).



Chapter 3

Why God Permits Evil



Justifiably, the question arises as to why God has permitted man to suffer for thousands of years, and then, only when Christ returns and establishes his Kingdom is all changed? The question of suffering and evil has always been an enigma to man. Philosophers of all times and ages have pondered the question to no avail. But the Scriptures provide a logical answer to this question which leaves one in awe.

Webster defines evil as “that which produces unhappiness; anything which either directly or remotely causes suffering of any kind.”

God desires mankind to live in peace, harmony and happiness. He knows this will only happen as each practices the principles of righteousness and love. Otherwise evil will result with its consequences of suffering and unhappiness.

Here we are faced with what can be referred to as the “dilemma of God”—the planetary systems move in mechanical obedience; the animal creation is driven mainly by instinct; but God desired the human race to have a free will and to “worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). God could have programmed the ideal man and utopia would have been inevitable, but man would be no better than a robot, nor would he be happy. Further, it is impossible to worship only “in truth,” to obey truth and righteousness for what you can get out of it without having the “spirit” or appreciation of righteousness.

Out of sheer appreciation of the principles of righteousness—worshipping in spirit—God

desired man to live in harmony with both his Creator and fellow man. God knows it is only as man is fully motivated by the principles of righteousness, that he can really attain happiness for himself and be in that attitude of cheerful concern for the happiness of his fellows.

The problems of free has a built-in dilemma. Man can rebel against his Creator. The Lord was willing to bestow free will, fully cognizant that it would cost Him dearly before man became fully responsible to this freedom. What an awesome power! Man can stand in stiff-necked rebellion against his Creator. He can refuse to submit to God’s authority. He can refuse to accept God’s favor. He can choose to avert the mercy of God and adamantly stand upon his decision against God. For by free will, man is man, created in the image of God, and neither an animal nor a machine.

Put yourself in God’s place to appreciate this dilemma. A parent will tell his baby not to touch the stove because it is hot. But, what does a baby know about being burned? The anxious parent knows the inevitability of the baby touching the stove before learning the consequence of heat. A wise parent will create a controlled experience with heat—lightly and quickly touching the child’s hand where the heat is not too severe. And all through life parents will admonish their children, knowing that they will only learn certain lessons the “hard way”—by experience.

As our Father, God knew man would not comprehend His warning about sin, disobedience and their dire consequences. So God formulated a plan whereby man, through his own choice, might first experience evil and then righteousness (in God's kingdom). This contrasting experience will demonstrate the beauty and righteousness of God's law and the dire consequence of its violation as no other process could.

The recovery from sin is called redemption in the Bible. Redemption simply means the release from sin and death through the payment of a price. The thought is similar to the releasing a person from prison when a benefactor pays the fine the prisoner couldn't afford. This release through the death of Jesus is often considered as an afterthought of God to salvage some of the human race. But the depth of God's wisdom is shown by His foresight in devising a plan that provides for man's free choice and experience with evil, redemption through Christ and ultimate eternal happiness. Thus Isaiah 46:9-10 speaks of God knowing and declaring the end from the beginning.

Eden: Actual History

The third chapter of Genesis is the divinely provided history of man's free will choice. God instructed man that if he practiced righteousness, he would live forever. If he disobeyed, then "dying he would die." Death would be a process of sorrow and suffering culminating with the grave. Note well that death, not eternal torment, is the penalty for sin (Genesis 2:17; Psalms 146:4). Like the child and heat, man did not know what suffering and death were. He disobeyed. God is now giving man a controlled experience with evil. We read in Ecclesiastes 1:13 and 3:10, "This sore travail hath God given to man to be exercised therewith." Man's travail with evil is for a purpose, that he might be exercised or taught certain lessons by it.

Some will say, "Don't tell me you still believe in original sin! Just because Adam

and Eve were disobedient, the whole human race are sinners?" In I Timothy 2:13,14; I Corinthians 15:21,22; Romans 5:14; and John 8:44, both Jesus and the apostles refer to the event in Eden as a real time-space situation. What better proof can we have that the Genesis account of Eden was actual history? Unfortunately, the logic of this concept has been obscured by Dark Age superstitions that have been attached to it, such as "hell fire," with a vindictive God who must be placated. Modern man is rightly repelled by the superstitions contained in some church theology, but these superstitions are not taught in the Bible. Shorn of Dark Age theology, there is no better explanation of man's miserable plight than the Scriptural teaching of original sin.

Another Look at Sin

Not too long ago, sin was treated lightly. It was called "ignorance," only a growing pain of the human race. Give man a bit more education, let him become a little more civilized and he will evolve out of his sin, leaving evil behind him. But now we are not so sure. The heinous events of World War II (12 million murders, leveled cities, gas chambers), followed by the continuing senseless acceleration of war, crime and violence (old people killed for kicks, 70-year-old women molested) and other immoralities, have forced man to take a second look at the problem of evil.

A fresh look at sin is pointedly reflected in the words of Dr. Cyril E. M. Joad, a noted Professor of Philosophy and Psychology at the University of London, and listed by the editor of *The American Weekly* as one of the world's great scientists. Joad said:

"For years my name regularly appeared with H. G. Wells, Bertrand Russell, and Aldous Huxley as a derider of religion.... Then came the war, and the existence of evil made its impact upon me as a positive and obtrusive fact. The war opened my eyes to the impossibility of writing off what I had better call man's 'sinfulness'



as a mere by-product of circumstance. The evil in man was due, I was taught, either to economic circumstance (because people were poor, their habits were squalid, their tastes undeveloped, their passions untamed) or to psychological circumstances. For were not psycho-analysts telling me that all the regressive, aggressive, or inhibited tendencies of human nature were due to the unfortunate psychological environment of one's early childhood?

"The implications are obvious; remove the circumstances, entrust children to psycho-analyzed nurses and teachers, and virtue would reign.

"I have come flatly to disbelieve all this. I see now that evil is endemic in man, and that the Christian doctrine of original sin expresses a deep and essential insight into human nature."

As Dr. Joad, society is taking another look at evil. It can no longer be considered a growing pain. It is too deadly a disease to be explained away by environment.

Speaking collectively of the human race, the Psalmist said, "In sin did my mother conceive me." (Psalms 51:5) The Apostle Paul in Romans 5:12 says, "By one man sin entered the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Since father Adam sinned, justice required that he die. Before he died, Adam had children who were born in sin. They inherited Adam's imperfections. Thus, the whole human race is born dying. This is how it is learning the consequences of evil. But the permission of evil is a brief controlled experience when compared with eternity. And what are some of the grim lessons? God permits evil to demonstrate that man without God results in:

- *Science* and possible extinction through the H-bomb or pollution;
- *Affluence* that spends \$900 million a year in the U.S. for pet food while 5

million humans starve to death;

- *Religious Institutions* whose assets total billions of dollars while millions live in poverty;
- *Technology* and its deadly tentacles of pollution encircling the globe;
- *Towering Cities* that are concrete jungles of crime and violence, filled with faceless people experiencing life without meaning and terrible loneliness.

God permits evil to prove that man without God can only result in man's inhumanity to man. What is this world coming to? An understanding of what results when man is separated from God.

The Problem of Communication

In our era of permissiveness, the justice of God seems to be an offense to the rationalist. But perhaps the problem is one of communication, which can be shown in the simple illustration of an argument. All of us at sometime have been engaged in an argument in which we really never objectively listened to the other party. We were too busy thinking of our answers to hear their logic. The rationalist is carrying on a debate with God. If he would only stop and listen to what God has explained in the historic account of Eden (Genesis 3), he would catch a glimpse of the wisdom and justice of God which becomes man's guarantee of an eternity of happiness.

Is God's Justice Severe?

Some question the severity of God's justice in the death penalty. Could not some other penalty than death have been a just recompense for Adam's disobedience? No doubt some other penalty would have been just; however, God chose this penalty because it best suited His overall plan for mankind. Once Adam was informed that death was the penalty for disobedience, then the penalty was fair.

A basic fact to always remember is that God in His foreknowledge knew that



Adam would disobey, therefore, long before the creation of Adam, God's wisdom devised a plan of recovery and ultimate happiness for the human race that would require the death of His only begotten Son. Thus I Peter 1:19-20 and Ephesians 1:4-7 speak of the blood of Christ as foreordained before the world began for the redemption of mankind. The Creator used the time-space situation in Eden to demonstrate the dependability of His justice. It is vital that man knows that "justice and judgment [just decisions] are the habitation of your [God's] throne"—Psalms 89:14. Justice is the foundation of the government of the universe, the basis of all God's dealings. Judgment is also spoken of as part of this foundation. The Hebrew word here means "a just decision." We can take comfort in the realization that throughout eternity all of God's decisions will be just.

Man was placed in the Edenic paradise to thoroughly enjoy the love of God. Suppose that after Adam and Eve had lived obediently for a while, God changed His mind and chased them out of the garden condition into the thorns and thistles of the unfinished earth. His love would be worthless, whimsical, because it was not based on justice. It would be changeable.

Another hypothetical situation: If when Adam disobeyed, God said, "Oh, I will overlook your disobedience this time, I will not punish you as I promised to do." Adam might say, "Wonderful! I am surely glad God is more loving than just."

Wonderful? No! This would be whimsical, capricious, arbitrary. The Creator and Ruler of the universe could never be trusted throughout eternity. At any time, in any place, with any order of intelligent creatures, God might at the slightest whim change His mind and turn on

His creatures. Eden proved the unchangeableness of God's justice. God declares in Malachi 3:6, "I am Jehovah, I change not." James 1:17 states, "The Father of lights in whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

How unchangeable is God's justice? So unyielding that God's court of justice required the payment of the costliest fine ever stipulated in a court of law. What judge has been willing to give up his own innocent son to death in order to cancel the debt of crime of the defendant?

Another Problem of Communication

Our Creator wants us to know the depths of His love, that He is the most loving Being in the universe. How can God communicate this to our finite minds? In human relationships words of love can be quite meaningless. Actions speak louder than words. How did God show His love? With tender Fatherly emotions of sorrow, God took the dearest treasure of His heart, His only Begotten Son, and sent Him to earth to suffer and die at the hands of man. At great cost to Himself, the wisdom of God formulated a plan which reveals that He is both just (unyielding justice) and the justifier (benefactor) of mankind (Romans 3:25-26).

The simple events of Eden and Calvary tell so much about our God. Calvary is the greatest manifestation of love and mercy in the history of the universe. The combination of Eden and Calvary stand as a pledge throughout eternity that there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning in God's justice.

The world is, therefore, by experience coming to an understanding of God's ways.



Chapter 4

A Ransom For All



The Scriptures are explicit that not just a few, who call themselves Christians or who believe a certain way, but all mankind will benefit by the death of Jesus. Hebrews 2:9 states, “Jesus Christ by the grace of God tasted death for every man.” God’s justice demands that all mankind, living and dead, before and after the death of Christ, will experience the benefits of Christ’s death.

The following scriptures unfold the beautiful logic of God’s justice in this matter: I Timothy 2:6 speaks of Jesus’ death as “a *ransom* for all to be testified in due time.” The word “ransom” is a translation of the Greek word *anti-lutron* which means corresponding price. Father Adam, perfect, sinned. Death passed upon him and the prospective human race yet in his loins. Deliverance from death required the payment of a corresponding price, the death of a perfect man. No member of the sinful, imperfect, human race could pay this price. Only Jesus, who was “holy, harmless, separate from sinners” could (Hebrews 7:26).

The perfect man Jesus died for Adam’s sin, thereby redeeming Adam and his offspring, the human race, from death. Paul in Romans 5:17 says, “Therefore as by the offense of one [Adam], judgment came upon

all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [Jesus], the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”

The question is sometimes raised, does not the providing of a ransom for man’s escape from death prove that the death sentence was unjust or too severe, and therefore God changed His mind? The very fact God provided so expensive a ransom price proves that His justice is unbending. In courts of law, several forms of punishment may be equally just for a specific crime; for example, five years’ imprisonment or twenty thousand dollars. Say we were peniless and received such a sentence. After serving half a year, a complete stranger came along and took an interest in our case and paid the twenty thousand dollars, would we not feel indebted to him for the rest of our lives!

The Scriptures reveal that the ransom price, as a satisfaction for justice, was co-existent as an alternative to the death sentence. Thus, Jesus is spoken of as “slain from before the foundation of the world” (I Peter 1:19-20; Revelation 13:8). The Psalmist also states that no man could give a ransom for his brother (Psalms 49:7).

For man's eternal good, God permits him to experience the effects of the death sentence. Then He applies the alternative means of satisfying justice, the ransom price. When mankind becomes fully aware, they will be eternally indebted to their Redeemer, the one who paid the fine to the court of the universe for their release from the prison-house of death.

Why Jesus Suffered

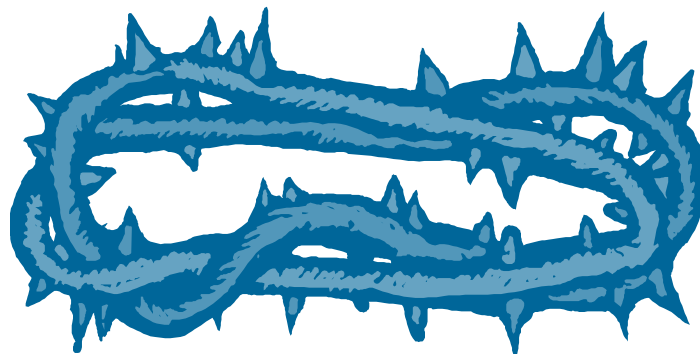
Not only did Jesus die to provide the fine, a perfect human life that will eventually release the human race from death, but during his lifetime he suffered at the hands of his fellow man so that he could fully sympathize with their every need.

The Prophet Isaiah anticipated Jesus' suffering. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows acquainted with grief.... Surely he has borne our grief, and carried our sorrows.... He was wounded for our transgressions... and with his stripes we are healed." Isaiah 53: 3-5.

Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Jesus is a sympathetic high priest who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Jesus continually permitted himself to be afflicted

through contact with sinful man. Every time Jesus healed, it was at the expense of his own strength. We read that "virtue [strength] went out from him" (Mark 5:30) as he healed the blind, the lame, the deaf, the lepers. He was expending his own strength so that he might be touched with a feeling of our infirmities.

Further, Jesus was mocked. He experienced brutality, violence and murder at the hands of his fellow men. As a Jew, he tasted the racial scorn of the Romans. He identified himself with poverty, drudgery and obscurity. Full of compassion, his heart was moved for the mentally ill, the physically sick, the lame, the deaf, the blind. Why? So that in his Kingdom Christ will know just what lessons mankind will need. "Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." (Hebrews 5:2) Jesus assumed upon his shoulders the ills of what this world is coming to. Indeed, he has compassion on the ignorant and them that are out of the way. Those whom he ransomed, he will know how to restore.



Chapter 5

The Call of the Church



Jesus died nearly 2,000 years ago. The question naturally arises, Why the long delay before setting up his Kingdom for the blessing of all mankind? One thing is clear throughout the Bible: God has not been attempting to convert the world since Jesus' death and resurrection.

The Scriptures speak of God dealing with only a few for a specific purpose. Christ's followers are spoken of as a little flock. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). God is only calling a few; a representative of every type of the human race is being called into the church of Christ.

The Greek word for church is *ecclesia* which literally means "called out ones." These called out ones, the little flock, will share with Christ when he establishes his Kingdom for the blessing of all mankind. Thus Paul says, "Know you not that the saints shall judge the world?" (I Corinthians 6:2).

The Revelator discloses that the followers of Jesus will live and reign with him during his Kingdom, during the time that the benefits of Jesus' death are bestowed upon the world of mankind (Rev. 20:4).

Jesus' words in Mark 4:12 show that God is not presently interested in converting even the majority of mankind. "Unto you it is given to know the mystery [secret] of the Kingdom of God, but unto them that are without all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." This scripture might seem strange to some, but it gives us an insight into

what God has been doing between the death of Jesus and the return of Jesus to set up his Kingdom upon the earth.

Have you ever wondered why the Bible is difficult to understand? By divine intent it has been written in parables, dark sayings and symbols so that it would not be easily understood. Why? So that the majority would not bother and consequently would not be converted. During the Christian Age, the Lord is only converting a few, a "little flock," "who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, honor and immortality"—Rom. 2:7. These are elsewhere symbolically referred to as the bride of Christ.

After Christ returns, these believers will be united with him and then the conversion of the world will begin. Revelation 22:17 prophesied of that time: "And the Spirit [the returned Christ] and the bride [the true church] say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that thirsts come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

This sequence of the call of the church, the establishment of the kingdom, then the blessing of the remainder of mankind is also corroborated by Acts 15:14-17. "God for the first time did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name [the true church]. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, after this I will return and will build the tabernacle of David which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue [remainder] of men might seek after the Lord...."

Note these points: A small group, "a people for His name" is first selected out of the Gentiles. Then

the tabernacle of David, which was an Old Testament type or illustration of the Kingdom of Christ, is set up again. Why is the church first called? Why is the Kingdom (tabernacle of David) then set up? “That the residue [all that remain] of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles.” First a choice group is called out of the Gentile nations so that afterwards, by it the rest of the Gentiles—the vast majority—may learn to call upon God’s name.

Remember 1 Timothy 2:6, speaking of Jesus, said, “Who gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time.” The “due time” for the true church to learn of the ransom is now during the Christian Age, but the “due time” for the rest of mankind to understand the ransom is yet future. Mankind will be re-educated by the church.

Since the vast majority of the human race went into its graves without hearing or understanding the “ransom for all,” the Kingdom will require the raising of the dead. This is just what Jesus tells us in John 5:28. “Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good to a resurrection of life and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment” (RSV).

Note again the same pattern of sequence we have seen in other scriptures. All will be raised from the dead—first, “they that have done good.” This refers to the true church. During Christ’s return they will be raised to spiritual life and united with their heavenly Lord. Then will follow the resurrection of the “evil class,” all the remainder of men.

They will come forth to a “resurrection of judgment.” The King James Bible, translated in A.D. 1611, grossly mistranslated the word “judgment” with the word “damnation.” The American Revised Version in 1881 used the word “judgment,” and no translation since has used the word “damnation.”

The Greek word in the text is *krisis* and it actually denotes “a crucial testing time.” This Greek word is the source of our English word “crisis.” And it has the same meaning. A doctor might say, “The patient will reach his crisis tomorrow morning.” This does not mean that the patient will die tomorrow morning. Rather,

the crisis of an illness is that period when the patient will take a turn for the better or for the worse.

The “crisis” or trial time for the church is in this present life, but the “crisis” or trial time of the remainder of mankind will be at the resurrection in the Kingdom. Billions of mankind before and after Jesus’ earthly ministry died without receiving the light of Jesus. Yet John 1:9 states that Jesus is the light that “lights every man that comes into the world.”

A further Scriptural confirmation that, for most, truth enlightenment will require an awakening from the dead. The world has yet to come to this momentous experience.

Why the Church Is Called First

Why is the true church first selected to share with Christ in the Kingdom work of blessing mankind? There are a number of reasons given in the Scriptures.

One reason can be illustrated by the noble work of Alcoholics Anonymous. An essential step of AA therapy is to assign a former alcoholic to each alcoholic that comes for help. The victim being driven by alcohol will not readily accept help or advice from just anyone. How could anyone know his agony, his depression, his desperation if he has not shared the same experience? But the alcoholic will accept help from a former alcoholic because he knows that this person can understand his agony. And this former alcoholic stands ready at any time to come to his side, to plead with him. It requires a former alcoholic to rehabilitate an alcoholic.

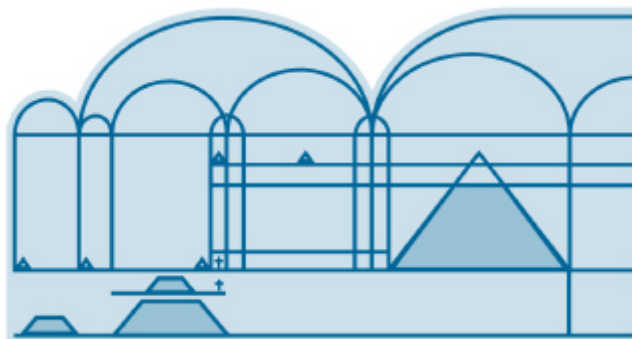
When mankind comes forth from the grave in Christ’s Kingdom, they will be informed they have been purchased with the precious blood of Christ and they will be made aware of the fact that they are now under the reign of Jesus Christ and his church (I Corinthians 6:2). What confidence they will have that the church will know just how to enter into their problems! Why? Because the church also were once sinners. This plan for rehabilitation will work. The majority will gladly receive the instruction, the disciplining, the nurturing necessary to pass their trial for eternal life.

The world, for whom Christ died (John 3:16), is about to embark on an Age which will realize all humanity’s deepest longings (Rom. 8:20, 22; Isa. 25:9).



Chapter 6

The Kingdom of Christ



The prophecies considered in Chapter One indicate that we are at the end of the age, therefore the selection of the church is nearly completed. The great time of trouble foretold in Daniel 12:1 and Matthew 24:21 is upon us. Haggai 2:7 contains a thrilling promise that we should cherish in these troubling times.

Speaking of this “Time of Trouble” Haggai prophesied, “And I will shake all nations and the desire of all nations will come.” How comforting! The legitimate desires of all nations or peoples shall come. The Scriptures show that one of the reasons for the “Time of Trouble” is that the various segments of society are demanding both just and fancied desires from each other. And nations are superimposing their desires upon other nations. The result is the disintegration of our present evil world. But all people have legitimate desires that God will fulfill after the tribulation demonstrates that selfish man cannot establish his own utopia.

What are some of these desires the Kingdom will fulfill? If we asked the working man struggling to keep his head above water, “What is your desire?” his answer would be, “If only we had economic security.” Speaking of the Kingdom, Isaiah 65:21-23 says, “They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit. They shall not plant and another eat. They shall not labor in vain nor bring forth for trouble.”

There will be no unemployment problem, fear of automation, inflation, depression or any economic problem. In the Kingdom, all will have economic security as symbolized by these words of Isaiah.

If we stopped a man on the streets of Harlem and asked him what he desired, he would reply, “Why, if the needs of the poor and minorities were only understood, and if we could only be assured of justice, then life could be beautiful.” The Kingdom will satisfy these desires. Then “He [God] will defend the cause of the poor, deliver the needy and crush the oppressor.” (Psalms 72:4) And Isaiah 9:7 again tells us, “Of the increase of his [Christ’s] government there will be no end.... It will be established with justice and righteousness forevermore.”

If we asked one of our elderly in our crime ridden cities what is his desire, he would probably reply, “If only there were no more crime and violence.” This desire will also come, for in the Kingdom we read, “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [Kingdom], for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:9).

What would be the desire of patients in hospitals? Of course, they would say, “If only there were no sickness and crippling diseases, no cancer, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy. If only the blind could see, the deaf could hear and the crippled walk.” Oh! Thank God! These desires will be fulfilled! Of the Kingdom we read in Isaiah 33:24, “And no inhabitant will say I am sick.” Isaiah 35:5— “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy.”

And what would be the desire of youth? One of their many idealisms is, “Can’t there be a world without war? And why can’t the billions of dollars

and the cream of technology that is wasted on the armament race be harnessed for peace and human needs?" In the Kingdom we read in Isaiah 2:4, "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation neither shall they learn war anymore."

If we went to the sub-Saharan drought belt of Africa where over a million have starved to death in a recent six-year period, and ask, "What is the one desire in life you want?"—with one accord they would say, "Oh, if only the rains could be depended on, so that we could be assured that the land could bring forth food to feed our children." The climatic conditions in the Kingdom will be ideal. The earth will bring forth in abundance. In Isaiah 35:1,7, we read, "The desert shall blossom as a rose.... And the parched ground shall become a pool and the lands springs of water."

Think of the countless millions who have lost loved ones in death. Their one desire is the return of these dear victims. And in the Kingdom they will be united with their loved ones. Speaking of all that died, Hosea 13:14 says, "I will ransom [deliver] them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be your plagues; O grave, I will be your destruction." Is it any wonder Jesus taught us to pray, "Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"?

Is Man Too Selfish?

Well, someone might say, God will wonderfully bless mankind in the Kingdom, but there is still the problem of man. If history has taught us anything, it is that man is too selfish to permit an ideal society. This has been true, but the reason the Kingdom will work is that God intends to change man's selfish heart of stone into a heart of love. We have seen in the chapter on the permission of evil that the basic lesson God is now teaching man is the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Man alienated himself from God by disobeying and man without God results in selfish havoc.

The Kingdom of Christ will rule in righteousness; the knowledge of the Lord will cover the

earth as the waters cover the deep so that all will know the Lord (Isaiah 11:9). Satan will be bound so that he cannot deceive the people (Revelation 20:1-3). The love of God will abundantly bestow blessings of life, peace and happiness upon all. The very spirit or influence of this Kingdom arrangement will have an overwhelming transforming effect on the hearts of men.

Of this mighty working of the spirit we read in Ezekiel 11:19-20, "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh. That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people. and I will be their God."

The Iron Rule

For many an iron rule will at first be required in order to change their heart of stone into a heart of flesh. The laws of the Kingdom of Christ will be far more exacting than those of any previous government and the liberties of the people will be restricted to a degree that will be galling indeed to many now clamoring for an increase of liberty without responsibility.

Liberty to deceive, to misrepresent, to overreach and to defraud others, will be entirely stopped. Liberty to abuse themselves or others in food or in drink, or in any way to corrupt good manners, will be totally denied to all.

Liberty or license to do wrong of any sort will not be granted to any. The only liberty that will be granted to any will be the true and glorious liberty of the sons of God—liberty to do good to themselves and others in any and in every way. Nothing will be allowed to injure or destroy in all that holy kingdom. (Isaiah 11:9; Romans 8:21)

That rule will consequently be felt by some to be a severe one, breaking up all their former habits and customs, as well as breaking up present institutions founded upon these false habits and false ideas of liberty. Because of its firmness and vigor, it is symbolically



called an iron rule, “He shall rule them with a rod of iron.” (Compare Revelation 2:26, 27; Psalms 2:8-12, and 49:14.) Thus will be fulfilled the statement, “Judgment will I lay to the line and righteousness to the plummet. And the hail [righteous judgment] shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters [truth] shall overflow the hiding place,” and every hidden thing shall be revealed. Isa. 28:17; Matt. 10:26.

Some will feel rebellious against that perfect and equitable rule. Now under the influence of Satan, they lord it over their fellow men. In the Kingdom, these will attempt to live wholly at the expense of others without rendering compensating service. This present life of self-indulgence and gratification will naturally demand and receive many and severe disciplines under that reign, before such will learn the lessons of that Kingdom—equity, justice, righteousness. Psa. 89:32; Luke 12:47,48

But, blessed thought! When the Prince of Life has put in force the laws of righteousness and equity with an iron rule, the masses of mankind will learn that “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” They will learn that God’s plan and laws are best in the end for all concerned, and ultimately they will learn to love righteousness and hate iniquity. (Psalms 45:7; Hebrews 1:9) All under that reign who have not learned to love the right, will be counted unworthy of lasting life and will be cut off from among the people. Acts 3:23; Rev. 20:9; Psa. 11:5-7.

Revelation 21:4 beautifully sums up the work of the Kingdom: “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

At the end of the thousand-year Kingdom of Christ, as mankind stands at the threshold of eternity, they will look back upon this present life of suffering, sickness and sorrow. Though this experience seems dark and interminable at present, then, by contrast with eternity, it will seem trifling. With this grand

perspective, what this world is coming to now is seen as only a necessary bridge that passes over into life everlasting.

Men will thank their God for this experience with sin and evil, and at that time all creatures in heaven and every creature on earth will raise their voices in that grand Hallelujah chorus recorded in Revelation 5:13, “Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him [God] that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb [that was slain] for ever and ever.” Amen.

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