



# The Kingdom of God

# CONTENTS

<b>THE KINGDOM OF GOD—PART I</b> .....	2
Early Church Views of the Kingdom.....	3
Prevailing Protestant Views.....	4
Bible Predictions of the Kingdom .....	8
Preparation for the Kingdom .....	12
 <b>KINGDOM OF GOD—PART II</b> .....	17
Signs of Its Establishment.....	17
Increase of Knowledge .....	18
Distress of Nations .....	22
The Rebirth of Israel .....	25
End of the Age Witness .....	29
 <b>THE KINGDOM OF GOD—PART III</b> .....	32
Results of Its Establishment.....	32
Resurrection of the Dead .....	33
Will There Be Room? .....	38
Judgment of the World .....	42
 <b>THE KINGDOM OF GOD—PART IV</b> .....	51
Peace, Life, Restoration.....	51
Everlasting Life and Happiness .....	55
Harmony with the Creator .....	61
Further Proof .....	65
 Bibliography.....	73

DAWN BIBLE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION  
PO Box 521167  
Longwood, FL 32752  
1-800-234-3296  
[www.dawnbible.com](http://www.dawnbible.com)



# The Kingdom of God

## Part I

Nearly twenty centuries ago Jesus Christ, the Founder of Christianity, set forth a revolutionary doctrine that has since created much interest in the world. Here was a religious teacher who did not emphasize any prescribed ritual or develop any new system of philosophical logic. His teaching stressed something which enjoyed no previous popular exposition, though interwoven in the obscure prophecies of the Old Testament: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Heaven.

The subject of the kingdom was the all-absorbing theme of Jesus' earthly ministry. At least thirty parables were devoted to it. God's purpose of establishing it upon the earth was set forth as the greatest hope of mankind. It was given the most prominent place in the Lord's model prayer, following the acknowledgment of the greatness of God: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matt. 6:10) For centuries now, earnest Christians have been repeating these words and praying for God's kingdom to come.

An earthly kingdom under heavenly control! Divine intervention in the affairs of men! What a strange and unfamiliar ring these words have. It is a doctrine that is scarcely heard or taught in any of the churches of today. Concerning this point, the noted historian, H. G. Wells, commented:

“Remarkable is the enormous prominence given by Jesus to the teaching of what he called the kingdom of heaven and its comparative insignificance in the procedure and teaching of most of the Christian churches.” (1)

Here is an enigma that raises many questions in the mind of the inquirer for truth. If Jesus, the Founder of Christianity, “went about all the cities and villages” devoting himself to “preaching the Gospel of the kingdom” (Matt. 9:35), why does this theme not continue to be the keynote of the churches today? Was Jesus mistaken in his expectations that God would establish his kingdom upon the earth? Is this view corroborated or contradicted by the remainder of the Bible?

These are thought-provoking questions, which deserve reasonable answers. This presentation will suggest solutions which are based upon church history, the sacred writings of Scripture, and current world affairs. It will begin with a review of the evolution of thought within the Christian churches regarding the doctrine of the kingdom.

## **EARLY CHURCH VIEWS OF THE KINGDOM**

It is a matter of historical fact that the Christians of the first two centuries believed in the future establishment of God’s kingdom upon earth as a vital part of their faith. This is well authenticated by church historians and is summed up in the following excerpt from the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

“Faith in the nearness of Christ’s second advent and the establishing of his reign of glory on the earth was undoubtedly a strong point in the primitive Christian Church. ... These enthusiastic expectations were inseparably bound up with the Christian faith down to the middle of the second century.” (2)

It was not until the rise to power of the papal church that the truth regarding the earthly kingdom began to be lost sight of and finally was repudiated altogether, as shown in the same encyclopedic reference:

“After the middle of the second century ... the spirit of philosophical and theological speculation and of ethical reflection, which began to spread through the churches, did not know what to make of the old hopes of the future. To a new generation they seemed paltry ... fantastic ... but more than this, these wild dreams about the glorious kingdom of Christ began to disturb the organization which the churches had seen fit to introduce. ... Augustine was the first who ventured to teach that the Catholic Church ... was the kingdom of Christ, that the millennial kingdom had commenced with the appearing of Christ, and was therefore an accomplished fact. By this doctrine of Augustine’s, the old millennarianism ... was ... banished from the official theology.” (3)

During the Reformation many Bible truths which were lost sight of during the Dark Ages were recovered. Once again the Bible was upheld as the only standard for Christian doctrine. Yet, perhaps because true Bible study had been restricted for so many hundreds of years, misconceptions of the kingdom continued to dominate in most Protestant circles:

“The German and Swiss reformers ... threw millennarianism overboard. ... They took up the same ground in this respect which the Roman Catholic Church had occupied since the time of Augustine.” (4)

Even after church-state systems were abolished, the term “Christendom” (Christ’s kingdom) persisted. In a vague sense God’s earthly kingdom was regarded as being represented in the modern Christian nations.

## **PREVAILING PROTESTANT VIEWS**

Today the Protestant world is found divided into two major camps. On one extreme are found the Fundamentalists, who value the inspiration of the Bible but demand a literal interpretation for most of it. This has led to difficulty in harmonizing certain teachings bearing

on the kingdom and the future of the earth. Some of these Christians believe that the earth is doomed to a fiery destruction in the final days of God's vengeance upon man:

"The earth was destroyed by water. Next time it will be by fire. ... When God's plans are ready, it may, by explosion from within, or by collision with some other heavenly body, again flare into a seething mass of flame." (5)

This view pictures only the saints of God as saved and the remainder of humanity without any hope after this final catastrophe has taken place. Some Fundamentalists believe the earth will be renewed and that Christ will reign for a thousand years, but only the resurrected saints in their glorified spiritual bodies will benefit. (6) According to this view, at the end of the millennial reign, after the wicked dead are judged, the saints are transferred to heaven. The reformed earth will then stand empty and unpopulated, its role in human destiny having been fulfilled. With the Planet Earth thought to be only of temporary importance and with only the saints benefiting from the Millennium, the concept of our earthly kingdom as the great hope of the masses of mankind is completely lost.

In this day of enlightenment, it has become possible to apply sound methods of Bible study to harmonize apparently conflicting teachings. After examining the range of texts that bear on this subject, students of the Bible are convinced that God designed his Planet Earth as a permanent abode for his human creation. Isaiah 45:18 reads: "For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited." And Psalm 37:11,29 states: "The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. ... The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever."

Those texts which are thought to teach that the earth will be destroyed may quite readily be shown to be either

poor translations or symbolic in meaning. "What shall be the sign of ... the end of the world?" Matthew 24:3 refers, rather, to the end of the age or dispensation just preceding the establishment of the kingdom. The Greek word *aion*, which is translated "world" (7) in this text, is defined as "age, indefinite time, or dispensation" by Dr. Young, and is so rendered in the newer versions.

Another verse, found in II Peter 3:6, provides further corroboration of this. Speaking of the social order or arrangement that existed before the Flood, Peter writes: "The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." Here the Greek word *kosmos*, is used and is defined by Dr. Young as "arrangement" or "beauty" as well as "world." (8) It is quite obvious that the Planet Earth was not destroyed at the Flood but merely the people who made up the evil social order or arrangement of that period.

Finally, a third text shows that the fire which will consume the earth is symbolic and represents the great time of distress and trouble among the nations which God will use to prepare the hearts of the people for his kingdom. It is found in Zephaniah 3:8,9, and reads: "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent."

Notice that after the earth is symbolically devoured by the "fire" of God's jealousy, some of the inhabitants of the earth still remain. These are not the saints, for they already know the "pure language." It is then that God turns to the people, intervenes in their earthly affairs, establishes his kingdom of righteousness, and offers them the "pure language" of truth.

Thus is shown a picture of a very loving God offering everlasting human life to all who will be willing to respond to the “pure language” and “serve him with one consent”—a very far cry, indeed, from the narrow view of an angry, vindictive, wrathful God, eager to annihilate his wayward creation.

On the other extreme of Protestantism, the Modernists have so distorted the original hope of the kingdom that it has lost all its true meaning. Briefly, they believe that if peace and goodwill are ever to be established upon the earth, it is Man himself who must do it. All faith in the promises of God respecting his kingdom has been completely lost. Their view, though bereft of any scriptural support, has gained in acceptance and now dominates all Christian thinking on the subject. The following excerpt from the pen of a one such Modernist serves to sum up this view:

“What has been achieved in the six thousand years of civilized life may represent only the incipient stages of growth of moral or ethical consciousness towards a condition so sublime that it approaches what is conceived to be divine. Belief in the possibility of continuing this upward trend by service to high ideals is the basis of a religion which will make the world happier and better whatever sacerdotal forms may be used to express it. It is by such exalted endeavors that the kingdom of man will prove worthy to be called the kingdom of God.” (9)

Within recent years, the inconsistency and unreasonableness of the Modernist view has become more and more apparent. Examples on every hand are showing that the moral structure of the people living in so-called Christian countries is not evolving upward but is steadily degenerating, as predicted in the Bible. Crime, juvenile delinquency, graft, corruption, immorality, excesses of liquor and tobacco, and the use of narcotics are all now endemic. All of this was to be expected, however, as shown in the Bible’s vivid preview of the present evil “time of the end.”



“But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of stress. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it.” (II Tim. 3:1-5, *RSV*) Thank God that when the kingdom is established and Christ is Ruler of all the earth, “the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.”—Isa. 26:9

## **BIBLE PREDICTIONS OF THE KINGDOM**

Now that a perspective of the views of Christians throughout the history of the church has been gained, the way has been cleared for a fresh examination of what the Bible teaches on the subject of the kingdom. Is the kingdom to be a literal government upon the earth? Is the ruler to be divinely appointed or chosen by ballot? What will be the extent of its control over the nations of earth? These are some of the questions answered by the prophecies of the Bible.

We believe that the future establishment of a divine government upon the earth is the clear and harmonious teaching of both the Old and New Testaments. The Prophet Daniel, in two separate pictures, previews the rise and fall of the four universal empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, which were to rule the earth from his day onward until they would be supplanted by the kingdom of God. These accounts are found in the second and seventh chapters of Daniel, where the empires are pictured as four parts of a great image of a man, and again as four terrible beasts. In both of these pictures, the setting up of God's earthly kingdom is shown to follow the downfall of the last of these empires.

According to these prophecies, God would not grant universal dominion to any other earthly power after the

final decay of the Roman Empire. The barbaric tribes which conquered Rome later developed into such modern European nations as Germany (Alemanni), France (Franks), Great Britain (Anglo-Saxons), and Italy (Lombards). It is of these vestiges of the Roman Empire that the prophecies in Daniel refer:

“In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: ... it shall break in pieces and consume all these [former] kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.” (Dan. 2:44) “Behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”—Dan. 7:13,14

The establishment of God’s earthly kingdom is shown to be vested in the hands of Christ. Though absent from the earth between his first and second advents, Christ promised to return to establish God’s kingdom, as shown in the Parable of the Pounds.

“A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.” (Luke 19:11-15) The Revelator shows that the glorified church shares in the honor of reigning with Christ for a thousand years, thus giving rise to the expression “the millennial reign of Christ.”—Rev. 20:4,6

To clear up any doubts that might exist, Revelation 5:10 points out specifically that this reign is to take place upon the earth. As the representatives of God, who have proven their worthiness for this position, Christ and his church are divinely appointed to this office, not elected by the ballot of the people. Of this fact the Prophet Isaiah writes: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called ... The

Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. ... The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”—Isa. 9:6,7

Dating from Daniel’s time, the kingdom of God will be the fifth empire to exercise control over all the nations of the earth. Speaking of the extent of the influence of this divine rulership, the psalmist writes: “He [Christ] shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. ... Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.” (Ps. 72:8-11) “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the LORD’S: and he is the governor among the nations.”—Ps. 22:27,28

In highly pictorial language, the Prophet Micah also describes the kingdom, calling it “the mountain of the house of the LORD”: “In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. ... And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off.”—Mic. 4:1-3

From the foregoing description, it may be seen that the overall testimony of the Scriptures depicts the kingdom of God as a ruling government, controlling the affairs of the nations and enforcing divine standards of justice. Some Christians, however, have raised objections to this concept of the kingdom on the basis of several texts, which should be considered here.

The first is found in John 18:36, where Jesus is quoted as saying: “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but

now is my kingdom not from hence.” Here the word rendered “world” is translated from the Greek *kosmos*, meaning “arrangement, beauty, or world,” as previously mentioned. Hence Jesus was simply stating that his kingdom would not be established during the social order or arrangement that existed in his day.

Another text, Luke 17:20,21, as it is translated in the *Authorized Version*, gives the impression that God’s kingdom is only in the hearts of men: “And when he [Jesus] was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said: The kingdom of God cometh not with observation [margin, with outward show]: Neither shall they say, Lo here! Or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” On this basis some Christians believe that the primary significance of the term kingdom is the transforming influence that it creates in the hearts of believers as one Christian writer asserts:

“What was the kingdom that Jesus came to found? Not a political kingdom, but to reign in the hearts of men, and through their hearts control and transform their lives. The human heart is the realm in which Jesus came to reign... . The basic idea of the word [kingdom] implies Jesus’ dominion in the hearts of his people through all dispensations, onward into eternity.” (10)

We believe that a thorough analysis of the passage in Luke 17:20,21 will show that Jesus’ words mean much more than just a heart influence in men. Since Jesus was addressing the Pharisees, whom he elsewhere called “hypocrites” and a “generation of vipers,” it is evident that he could not have meant that his kingdom was embodied within the hearts of these listeners.

The *Emphatic Diaglott* by Benjamin Wilson clarifies the meaning of this text by translating it, “God’s Royal Majesty is among you,” showing that Jesus, the Royal Majesty and Ambassador of heaven, was present among the Pharisees.

Jesus' statement that the kingdom could not be discerned by outward observation should be understood to apply to the heavenly, or spiritual, phase of the kingdom arrangement, which will be invisible to the eyes of humans. Thus the words of Jesus may be seen to be harmonious with the overall testimony of the Scriptures depicting the kingdom as a powerful government, and they do not preclude its future establishment as such upon the earth.

Though the term kingdom as used in the Bible primarily has a future application, there is a limited secondary sense in which it is also applied to depict the work of grace that is presently transpiring in the hearts of believers. This usage is illustrated in Romans 14:17: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." And again in Colossians 1:13: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."

Here the influence and effect of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of consecrated believers in this life is described loosely as the kingdom of God. This work of grace is now in its incipient stages and will reach full fruition later when the heirs of the kingdom actually become associated with their Head, Jesus, and together administer the spiritual affairs of the kingdom. "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations."—Rev. 2:26

## **PREPARATION FOR THE KINGDOM**

Thus far the philosophy of church groups regarding the kingdom has been considered and compared with God's purpose to establish it upon the earth, as revealed in the Bible. Following is a brief outline of some of the preparations which have been made for the kingdom from the very dawn of man's creation to the present time.

The first three chapters of the Bible reveal that originally man was created perfect, in the moral likeness of God, and placed in an environment ideally suited to sustain his existence. Through a lack of experience with the results of evil, the first man Adam fell from his state of perfection and faced the consequences of sickness, suffering, and death. This heavy penalty was imposed upon Adam, not because of the magnitude of his sin, but because the principle of obedience to the Creator had been broken.

God's wisdom permitted the whole race of mankind to be plunged into this state of imperfection so that man could profit from a direct experience with evil, to show the awful results of disobedience to divine law. The history of man has demonstrated the heavy price which has already been paid to gain this experience. The entire world has been groaning and travailing together in pain under the burden of the reign of sin and death, and longing for deliverance. (Rom. 8:22) Unknown to mankind as a whole, the plan of God for man's recovery has been progressing steadily ever since his fall.

The kingdom of God, restoring the perfection that was lost in the Edenic paradise, could not come unless a means were provided to atone for the disobedience of Adam and his posterity. God, though greatly grieved by the disobedience of his earthly creatures, had nevertheless foreseen such an eventuality and had made provision for it. His great love prompted him to send his closest associate in the heavenly realm, his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to the earth to become a ransom sacrifice for sinful Adam. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."—I John 4:10

The Bible also declares that Jesus Christ "gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (I Tim. 2:6) "Therefore as by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification

of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." (Rom. 5:18,19) Here, then, was clear-cut, tangible evidence that God was still interested in his wayward creation and was actively working out the preliminaries which would make his future kingdom possible.

A very logical objection presented itself at this point. If it were truly God's intention to establish a kingdom and if his Son completed his atoning sacrifice at the close of his earthly ministry, why should there be a delay of almost two thousand years in setting up the kingdom? Some Christians offer the explanation that it is God's will to have them first convert the entire world to Christianity by their own efforts. When they have succeeded in accomplishing this feat, the hearts of men will be prepared for the establishment of God's kingdom:

"In the model prayer, we are taught to pray, 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth,' which seems to mean that the kingdom of God makes progress on earth, in proportion as the will of God is done by men... . The kingdom is a present reality, and that kingdom is destined to grow from small beginnings to vast issues... . The rule of God is meant to be exercised more and more fully, in all spheres of human activity, in world politics, in trade, in commerce, in literature, in family life, everywhere." (11)

In the past this view gave an appearance of reasonableness, since each century after the establishment of the church witnessed more and more conversions, until by 1979 more than one third of the world had been added to the ranks of "Christendom." By the year 2001, however, the number had slipped to a bare third. In fact, since the end of World War II there has been a marked penetration of eastern religions into Western society and the rise of secular theologies have created an atmosphere in which religious commitment has been replaced with scientific humanism. (12)

It should be realized that while the actual number of Christians is still increasing, in terms of relative percentage growth they are decreasing. The conclusion to be drawn, then, is that if it were left to man's devices to convert the world to Christianity before the kingdom could be established, the outlook for the future would be gloomy indeed.

Fortunately, however, by re-examining their Bibles, thoughtful Christians have discovered a plausible reason for the failure of Christianity to convert the world. They have come to realize that it is not God's will for the world to be converted in this age by man's own efforts. Jesus' instruction to be his witnesses "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8) included no assurance that the testimony would be received and acted upon.

Rather, now it is understood that it is God's will in this age to select out of the world only a small company of believers, the true church class, to become associated with his Son Jesus. "God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." (Acts 15:14) Not until the church class is complete and glorified with its Head, Christ, will it be the due time for the conversion of the world, the "residue" of humanity. "After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down ... that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles."—Acts 15:16,17

This understanding, that it simply is not God's intention to have the world converted at this time, sheds new light on long-standing Bible enigmas relating to the kingdom. Many have wondered why it was not Jesus' aim to convert the multitudes during his earthly ministry and why he defined the terms of discipleship so strictly that only a few responded. Recall his words to his own disciples when he explained that "unto you it is given to know the mystery 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.”—Mark 4:11,12; Matt 13:11-15

Now it becomes clear that Jesus understood his Father’s purposes and limited his call to the relatively few of acceptable heart condition who would qualify as his footstep followers. This harmonizes fully with other Bible texts, such as Matthew 7:14, which states: “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

What, then, is the true reason for the delay in setting up the kingdom? Several suggestions may be given. First, it was God’s intention to have the earth fully populated with Adam’s descendants and to provide all of them with a lifelong experience with evil and its awful consequences. In addition, a world where sin and sinful tendencies have predominated has provided a suitable testing ground for the faithfulness of the true church class. As potential heirs to a divine legacy of rulership, the consecrated followers of Jesus must be thoroughly tested and proven worthy in the face of the unfavorable conditions of this age—indifference, ridicule, and opposition.

After the number that compose the church class is fully complete and called out of the world and glorified with Jesus, it will be God’s due time to establish the kingdom in power and great glory and to direct his favor toward the “residue” of mankind. During the Millennial Age, when the kingdom will become operative, those Bible texts describing the world’s conversion will finally be fulfilled.

Then it shall be true that “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.” (Hab. 2:14) “And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD.”—Jer. 31:34

# The Kingdom of God

## Part II

*“So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.”*  
—*Luke 21:31*

### **SIGNS OF ITS ESTABLISHMENT**

Unknown to mankind as a whole, yet clearly revealed in the Bible, the plan of God for man's eternal happiness and salvation has been progressing steadily onward in an orderly and systematic manner. The permission of evil, man's experience with death and the results of sin, God's dealings with the Israelites, the sending of the only begotten Son of God into the world to become a ransom sacrifice, and the call and development of the church class have all been steps in God's plan. They have all been paving the way for the gigantic climax of the ages—the millennial morning when God establishes his kingdom in grandeur and glory, visibly intervening in the course of man's affairs.

For such a stupendous event as this, it would only be reasonable to expect that God would provide earnest students of the Bible with the information they need to identify the time preceding the occasion. This period is variously referred to in the Bible by such terms as “the last days,” “the end of the world [age],” “the time of the end,” “the day of wrath,” and “the day of Jehovah.”

The Apostle Paul wrote that the church class, or people of God, living in this period would be fully informed concerning the significance of events transpiring in the world: "Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. ... Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober."—I Thess. 5:4,6

Yes, God has been pleased to inform his people of their position in respect to the stream of time, particularly that they might cheer and comfort others concerning the true meaning of the fast-moving events of these days. What, then, are the signs of the end of the age? How can the events which prove that the long-awaited kingdom of God is near at hand be identified with reasonable accuracy?

There are several unusual and unique circumstances which characterize the pre-kingdom period and set it apart from anything that has ever occurred before in the history of man upon the earth. The scriptures present a series of four signs, each separate from the other, yet each calling attention to the same earth-shaking event which the Bible shows is destined to occur. We believe these signs will offer substantial evidence that the world is approaching the time when "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever."—Rev. 11:15

## **INCREASE OF KNOWLEDGE**

First to be mentioned is the sudden increase of knowledge foretold in Daniel's prophecy: "Shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." (Dan. 12:4) The last part of this text will be considered first. It contains a prediction that man's acquisition of knowledge would not be a relatively progressive process throughout the centuries, as might be expected, but rather that it would be brought about in a very sudden manner.

It is difficult to appreciate the fact that the diffusion of knowledge has been a relatively recent accomplishment, inasmuch as widespread education and the fruits of learning are so commonplace in our day. Yet a study of the subject corroborates the accuracy of Daniel's prophecy.

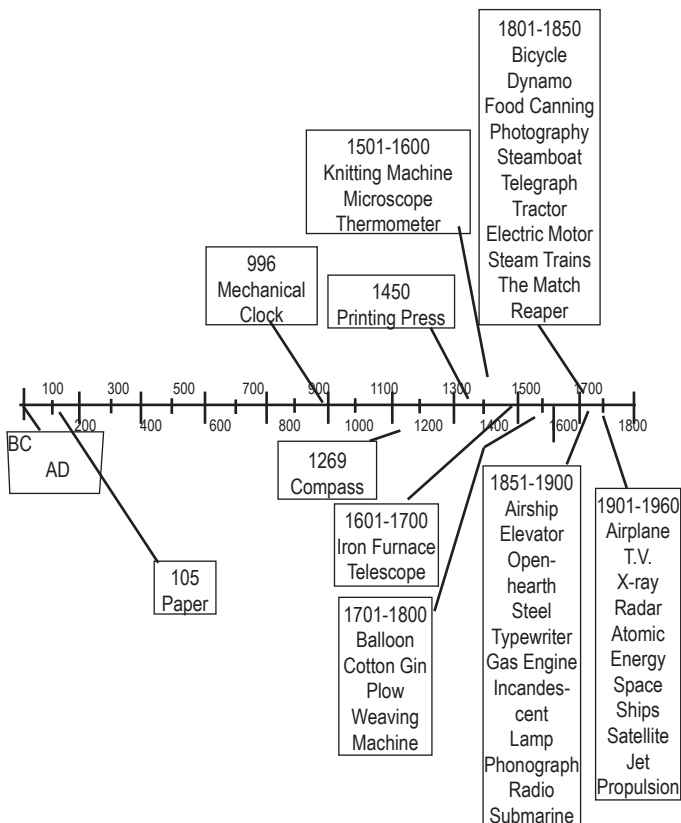
The invention and perfection of the printing press provided the greatest impetus for increasing man's knowledge by making it possible to preserve and circulate the benefits of other men's studies. The compulsory education of the common people is of still more recent origin and has enabled great numbers of people to enjoy the benefits of recorded knowledge and has stimulated further advances.

The following illustration might be used to highlight the modern nature and suddenness of man's increase of knowledge. If the last 6,000 years of man's educational progress were represented in a book with one page devoted to each year, it would not be until approximately 5,800 pages were written that the common man would be described as achieving the status of literacy.

Advancement toward literacy began when the industrial revolution highlighted the demand for specialized skills. The countries of western and northern Europe, the British Isles, and North America were the first to make significant gains in educating their people. It is quite surprising to learn that just a hundred fifty years ago 20 percent of the population of the United States fourteen years of age and older could not read or write. The 2000 U.S. census reported significant gains—the literacy rate now standing at 97 percent.

Literacy advances by other nations were slower and very recent in attainment. In India, 88 percent of the people were still illiterate in 1941; in China 85 percent were illiterate in 1949; in Mexico and Brazil, over 50 percent in 1947. As late as 1970, Southern Asia, which includes the Arab countries, still had a illiteracy rate of 59 percent.

## Timeline of Man's Basic Inventions



Since the 1960s major efforts have been staged to improve these appalling statistics. As the nations of the Third World awaken to the fact that their economic advancement depends upon the literacy of their people, public education has been on the increase around the world and world literacy has risen from 50 percent in 1950 to 79 percent in 2000. (13) Clearly man's increase in knowledge is a very recent development.

Recall now the first part of Daniel's prophecy: "Many shall run to and fro." On the basis of this prophecy, the noted English scientist and Bible scholar, Sir Isaac Newton, predicted that a time would come when man would travel at the speed of fifty miles per hour. Newton's predictions were considered so incredible that he was ridiculed by his eighteenth century contemporaries. Today, however, international jet travel, complex highway systems, superpowered automobiles, and streamlined trains have become commonplace.

These fast means of travel were also predicted in another Bible prophecy found in Nahum 2:3,4, where their development is linked with "the day of God's preparation," the period preceding the millennial kingdom: "The chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation. ... The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings."

Today, other inventions such as the telephone, radio, television, motion pictures, personal computers, and an array of hitech gadgets, as well as sophisticated medical technologies have become a standard part of our way of life. Instantaneous communication via the internet and readily available rapid transportation have shrunk the globe. What took a week in the past is now done in hours. The use of nuclear power has become commonplace. The dream of journeying to the moon was the stuff of science fiction, but in 1969 Neal Armstrong,

followed by others after him, stepped out onto its surface. Space shuttle missions into earth's orbit are launched on a regular basis and space ships probe the other planets of the solar system. The modern inventions and conveniences of our day resulting from the prophesied increase of knowledge were never before even dreamed of in the history of mankind.

Once again the accuracy of Daniel's prophecy should be analyzed. Did all these inventions occur gradually throughout man's history, or have they appeared suddenly? The illustration "Time line of Man's Basic Inventions" (14) was constructed to answer this question. Does it not highlight the fact that man's major inventions were developed within the last two centuries, rather than distributed equally throughout the annals of history?

We believe that there is a special significance attached to all this. Daniel's prophecy was given to draw attention to the increase of knowledge as one of a series of prophetic sign-posts announcing the end of the age and the approach of the millennial day, or kingdom of God. Nahum's prophecy associates rapid means of travel with "the day of God's preparation" for the kingdom. Therefore, both texts would indicate the establishment of the kingdom to be very near at hand.

## **DISTRESS OF NATIONS**

Second in the listing of the signs of the end is the great distress of nations which has gripped the world of our day. Commentators on the world scene are agreed that people far and near are distressed and perplexed over the social, political, environmental and economic problems of this generation. Mankind has always been beset by problems, but in several respects there has been no precedent to those which vex the world today. The Bible alone has provided a vivid preview of these troublous times and their final outcome, in prophecies reading like current newspaper headlines.

In Daniel's prophecy, this period of world history is described as "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time." The time of its occurrence is fixed by the additional statement, "Shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end."—Dan. 12:1,4

Jesus corroborated this prediction in his reply to the disciples' question, "What will be the sign of thy presence, and of the consummation of the age?" (Matt. 24:3, *Diaglott*) He said: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved." (Matt. 24:21,22) He answered further: "And there shall be ... upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; ...men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth."—Luke 21:25,26

Other inspired writers of the Bible have added their testimony concerning this period of world distress. The Apostle Paul wrote in I Thessalonians 5:2,3: "The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

Zephaniah adds to the setting: "The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly: ... the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD."—Zeph. 1:14-17

And Haggai states: "For thus saith the LORD of hosts, ... I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come."—Hag. 2:6,7

We believe that the evidence is very strong that we are now in this period of the World's history described



by Daniel and Jesus as the end or “consummation” of the age. In the last century mankind has experienced two global wars in a single generation. The hope that their ends would result in lasting peace was dashed by subsequent conflicts in southeast Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. The celebrated ending of the Cold War which raised the hopes of many has been followed by ethnic and political upheavals which have ruptured the peace of countries in eastern Europe. The world has also witnessed the advent of international terrorism. Some might contend that there have always been wars and that it is only natural for modern warfare to be more intense; since newer weapons and greater numbers of people are involved, but it is this very factor which sets this time apart from all other eras in man’s history.

Never before has there been such universal fear in the hearts of men “looking after those things which are coming on the earth.” (Luke 21: 26) Men’s minds today have been struck with a terror unknown prior to the Nuclear Age. Never before was it possible for man to annihilate all civilization with such terrible instruments of destruction as atomic and hydrogen bombs, nuclear radiation, intercontinental ballistic missiles, and chemical and germ warfare. Indeed, the weaponry now available to man could wipe out all life several times over.

A Hollywood film production, “On the Beach,” based on the book of the same name by Neville Shute, dramatized the possibility of a nuclear holocaust wiping out all “except those days should be shortened [by divine intervention], there should no flesh be saved.”

There are other aspects of today’s troubled world that may also be shown to stand without precedent in history. Think of the strenuous efforts for survival being made throughout the world, both collectively and individually. As the nations fling themselves headlong toward the final calamity, they are endeavoring to protect themselves by military compacts, regional alliances, and international councils.

Sensing the inevitable futility of these agreements, the various governments have tried to devise plans for civil defense in the event of sudden nuclear attack. Many people built home radiation shelters hoping that they would guarantee their survival. However, the uselessness of such measures against sophisticated modern weaponry have turned governments in the direction of fostering nuclear non-proliferation treaties to ensure their survival. These ties among the nations, along with their homeland security plans, although offering a measure of security, fall far short of erasing the fears of what might happen in the dreaded push-button war and do nothing to prevent the danger of terrorism.

The student of the Bible need not be alarmed over the events taking place in the world today. He realizes that they have been predicted in the Word of God and are shown to be the inevitable consequence of disobeying the laws of God concerning man's obligation both to his Creator and to his fellow man. He realizes, too, that there is really a silver lining behind the dark clouds.

Yes, the great time of trouble in which the world is plunged today actually constitutes one of the strongest evidences that God's kingdom is soon to be established. Man's extremity will then prove to be God's opportunity. When the nations have been shaken sufficiently so that they are willing to learn the ways of righteousness, then, by divine intervention, "the desire of all nations [for peace and security] shall come."

## **THE REBIRTH OF ISRAEL**

The third point that identifies the present time as the end of the age is the reestablishment of Israel as an independent nation. A history of the Jews provides a fascinating account of a people who were especially dealt with by God for a specific purpose. It is a record of a people that begins two thousand years before Christ, in the person of Abraham, and continues through colorful episodes of slavery, desert wanderings, divine revelations, and eventual establishment as a nation.

In this early period are found such famous personages as Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, and Solomon.

As shown in the Bible, the status of the Jews was unique, due to their special relationship to God. God had destined to select a people he could use both to provide a preview of the arrangements of his coming kingdom and offer the position of chief favor in that kingdom. God had said: "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ... ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."—Exod. 19:5,6

In addition, there were promises of earthly blessings and prosperity for faithfulness to the special covenant which he made with them: "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; then ... the land shall yield her increase; ... ye shall eat your bread to the full. ... And I will give peace in the land. ... And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. ... For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you. ... And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people." (Lev. 26:3-12) These were promises which had never before been made to a particular people; and if the conditions of faithfulness upon which they were based had been kept by the Israelites, they would have led to immeasurable blessings.

The history of the Jewish people, however, presents a continual record of unfaithfulness and disobedience to the ways of God, picturing the wayward course of the entire human race. Instead of receiving the blessings, they inherited the curses; for again the prophecy reads: "I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them: because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the Lord, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets." —Jer. 29:18,19

True to the prophecies, after the reign of King Solomon, who had succeeded in raising Israel to the pinnacle of its glory, Israel embarked on its downward path. Ten of its twelve tribes seceded to form a separate kingdom, so evil in God's sight that he allowed it to be conquered and the people deported to Assyria and scattered.

The two remaining tribes, notwithstanding the exhortations of the prophets, also fell into disrepute with God. In 606 B.C. they were defeated by Nebuchadnezzar and taken captive to Babylonia for seventy years. King Cyrus of Medo-Persia restored the Jews to their land, but they were unable to achieve the status of an independent nation. Israel was subject in turn to Persia, Greece, and finally Rome, at which time the Messiah in the person of Jesus Christ was sent to them.

Once again the nation of Israel had an opportunity to be received into God's favor by heeding the greatest of all the Jewish prophets. Jesus and his teachings, however, were rejected by the rulers of Israel. The sentence as pronounced by Jesus is recorded in Matthew 23:38: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." In A.D. 70 Jerusalem was burned to the ground, the people taken captive to Rome, and the Jews scattered among all nations, seemingly forever dispersed.

Nonetheless, God did not permanently cast off his people. The prophecies read: "Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely." (Jer. 32:37) "I will bring again the captivity (\*) of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them. ... And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God."—Amos 9:14,15

---

(\*) The Hebrew word *Shebuwth* rendered "captivity" may also be translated "a former state of prosperity," according to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. This phrase is then seen to apply to the time when God restores Israel's state of prosperity rather than to the loss of her independence.

Here lies the most astounding feature in the continuing story of the Jew, the modern episode fulfilling prophecy right before our eyes in the return of favor to Israel. Yes, the Jews have gone back! Out of almost every country some have returned.

After the UN partition plan for Israel was set up in 1948, Israel declared its independence, and a new nation was born. Where in the annals of history is there a precedent for the return of a people who had been scattered into every corner of the earth?

Israel seemingly has accomplished the impossible, that of reestablishing itself as a nation after a lapse of almost nineteen centuries. Yet it is an event which has not seemed strange to students of the prophecies, for they have been awaiting it for many years.

In Joel 3:1,2,9-11 is found a prophecy that links Israel's return with the great time of trouble upon the world: "When I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land. ... Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about."

Here the prophecy shows that the return of the Jews to their homeland would be accompanied by vast mobilization of arms by the Gentile nations as they prepared for global warfare. This combination of circumstances—the returning Jews and the contemporaneous international arms race—has found its fulfillment only in our day.

Perhaps the most conclusive evidence that the prophetic destiny of Israel is directly related to the end of the age is found in the parable of Jesus on the fig tree. When the

disciples asked the Master concerning the signs of his presence and of the end of the age, one of the replies that he gave was a parable, as recorded in Matthew 24:32, 33: "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." Until recently the full meaning of this reply was shrouded in mystery.

Today, students of the Bible understand that the sprouting fig tree is a symbol of the new nation of Israel putting forth its first signs of prosperity and maturity after a long season of dormancy. In the Old Testament, figs were used as a symbol of the Jewish people, as shown in Jeremiah the 24th chapter.

In the New Testament another incident reveals the same thing, as recorded in Mark 11:12-14,20-22.

Jesus' condemnation of the fig tree in this account was really leveled against the Jewish nation, which it represented. Israel claimed to have the fruits of righteousness at the time that Jesus their Messiah was sent. In reality this claim was false, since their Messiah was despised and rejected by the nation, which therefore justly deserved the punishment that later came upon it.

All these scriptural testimonies serve to highlight the fact that the due time for Israel's rebirth and sprouting as a nation would be in the end of the age. The Matthew account reads: "When ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." The parallel account in Luke 21:31 makes this still clearer with the rendering: "When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand."

## **END OF THE AGE WITNESS**

The fourth evidence that this is the end of the age is offered by Jesus' prophecy recorded in Matthew 24:14: "This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the

end come.” Reiterated in Mark 13:10 (*Moffatt translation*), it reads: “Ere the end, the Gospel must be preached to all nations.”

Jesus spoke these words to his disciples in reply to their question, “Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?” (Matt. 24:3, *RSV*) Later he commissioned his followers to be his witnesses, starting locally in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and finally to “the uttermost part of the earth.”—Acts 1:8

Here was an indication that by the providence of God the message of the kingdom was to be promulgated throughout the world as a testimony to all nations. When this is accomplished, then shall the final end come, that is, the great time of trouble among the nations which will close out this evil social order and usher in the millennial kingdom.

The first requisite of this great witness to the world would be the dissemination of the Word of God itself, in which are recorded the prophecies of God and his promises to his creatures. This feat of Bible distribution has now been accomplished by the collective efforts of various Bible societies. Their work may be summarized briefly as follows:

The first society to be founded for the purpose of printing Bibles at small cost and thus making possible their wide circulation was the Canstein Bible Institute, established in the year 1710 in Halle, Germany. Perhaps the strongest impetus to the distribution of Bibles was given after 1804 when the British and Foreign Bible Society was founded in London. This group, in turn, encouraged the organization of similar societies throughout Europe and America. In 1816 the American Bible Society was instituted.

Together, the various Bible societies have accomplished a widespread distribution and encouragement of the use of the Bible. By translations into over 1250 languages

and dialects and by nonprofit publication, the widest possible circulation has been secured. To date, it has been estimated that well over a 6 billion printed Bibles and portions have been distributed. (15)

The second requisite of the world witness is an accurate understanding of the kingdom message recorded in the Scriptures. Although translated into almost every tongue, accessible to all, and even a continual best seller, the Bible remains a sealed book to most of its readers in terms of being able to understand its contents. Traditional misconceptions of Bible teachings carried over from the past, when true Bible study was restricted, have hindered many from approaching the Scriptures in an unbiased manner.

Today the true Gospel of the kingdom is being preached not only by word of mouth but also by explanatory literature, radio and television and over the internet. Through these modern media, the message that God's kingdom is at hand is now able to penetrate the remotest areas, even "unto the uttermost part of the earth."

In view of the vast potentialities of these modern preaching methods, the witness to the nations concerning God's wondrous plan of salvation and coming kingdom will soon be complete. When the Gospel has thus been preached, regardless of the number responding to the message, "then the end shall come."



# The Kingdom of God

## Part III

### **THE RESULTS OF ITS ESTABLISHMENT**

Throughout all the ages of his existence upon the earth, man has striven commendably for certain worthy goals of life. These basic desires of humanity have been described in different terms, such as life, liberty, equality, brotherhood and the pursuit of happiness.

Statesmen have endeavored to bring about peace and good will among the nations. Government heads have striven for political independence and economic and social benefits for their countries. Champions of civil liberty have highlighted the needs and rights of the individual, regardless of race, creed, or color. Scientists have produced timesaving and labor-saving inventions. Doctors have waged a continual battle against disease and sought ways of improving man's health and lengthening his life.

Yes, noble men of every period and in every walk of life have sought to elevate the position of the human race. Notwithstanding these lofty aspirations to improve the lot of humanity, what of any consequence has actually been accomplished?

It is true that recent centuries have witnessed a gradual rise in the economic living standards of many people. But has anything constructive been achieved in attacking the basic cause of man's problems? Has the

greed or hatred or selfishness or other sin lurking in the hearts of men been erased, or even lessened? In the thousands of years of his history on earth, has man's life been altered to remove the fears of economic loss, war, sickness, pain, or death?

None can deny that all these basic evils still plague the human race and will continue to do so unless superhuman power is employed to extricate man from his plight. And this is the very assurance that is found recorded in the Bible. God has not forgotten the needs of his earthly creation and has designed a master plan by which it will be restored to its original perfection.

## **RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD**

Of all the major world religions, the Bible alone teaches an actual resurrection of the dead. Although the heathen religions believe in life after death, life is defined by these as an indestructible entity which never ceases to exist once it has begun. Death is considered a gateway into another form of life, higher or lower, thus bypassing the need for resurrection and substituting reincarnation or transmigration of souls instead.

In sharp contrast to this, the Bible teaches that everlasting life was a gift of the Creator and was taken back because of disobedience to the divine will: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezek. 18:4) Death is described in the Bible as a very real condition, completely devoid of life in any form, and as a great enemy of mankind.—Eccles. 9:5,10; Ps. 146:4; I Cor. 15:25,26

Only by the grace of God and the atoning work of Jesus Christ is it possible to have an individual's life restored through resurrection. Perhaps the greatest of all the promises which God has made regarding the kingdom is found in the scriptural declaration, "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."—Acts 24:15

The establishment of a divine government upon earth is intended to be a blessing, not only to those living at the time, but to all people, living or dead. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." (John 5:28,29) No other source but the Bible has produced a message of such comfort and hope, giving assurance to all that their deceased loved ones will return from the depths of the grave.

To those who find this feature of the plan of God difficult to believe, the Apostle Paul declared, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you [King Agrippa], that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 26:8) The mighty God who was able to form human beings originally is also able to recreate them and restore them to life. The great sacrifice of Jesus, having satisfied divine justice by atoning for the disobedience of Adam, guarantees the resurrection of all mankind. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." —I Cor. 15:22

The divine arrangement in the resurrection includes a plan for the gradual awakening of all the dead in two broad stages. The first to be benefited will be the footstep followers of Jesus, who have part in what is termed "the first resurrection." "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." (Rev. 20:6) Next in order will be the residue of mankind, all those who are to be blessed by the kingdom reign of the church class. These will be given the opportunity of remolding their lives in harmony with the precepts of Christ.

Notice these two phases of the resurrection as they are mentioned in I Corinthians 15:22,23, "In Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's

at his coming [during his thousand-year kingdom reign]." Here the phrase "Christ the firstfruits" includes the entire church class who are to be raised first. This is corroborated in James 1:18, which reads, "Of his own will begat he us with the Word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."

The use of the terms "firstfruits" and "first resurrection" suggests that there will also be "after-fruits" and a "second resurrection." God has destined that more than just the church class should obtain salvation. In a prophecy of the resurrection of all mankind, Job wrote: "If a man die, shall he live again? ... Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands." (Job 14:14,15) Moses expressed it in this way: "Thou turnest man to destruction [as punishment for sin]; and sayest, Return, ye children of men [because the sacrifice of Christ has atoned for sin]."—Ps. 90:3

If all mankind is to be resurrected the question might be asked, "What is the difference between the first and second resurrections?" The chief difference, apart from the order of awakening, is the type of salvation that is attained. For the church class a heavenly reward is promised, which will mean a change of nature from the human to the spiritual. Spiritual bodies with an accompanying greater range of abilities will be necessary for those who will share the kingdom reign with Christ.

For the residue of humanity there will be no change of nature, since God originally intended to have an earthly creation, and the object of the resurrection will be to restore it to the perfection which was lost in Eden. Man will be restored to his earthly home and, under the guidance and supervision of Christ and his church, will be granted the opportunity—by obedience to the righteous laws of the kingdom—of living there forever.

The Apostle Paul summarized the two salvations to be manifested in the resurrection when he wrote: "All

flesh is not the same flesh. ... There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. ... So also is the resurrection of the dead. ... There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. ... As is the earthy, such are they also that are [resurrected to the] earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are [resurrected to the] heavenly.”—I Cor. 15:39-48

A final testimony is provided by Jesus himself. Notice how his words recorded in John 11:25,26 provide confirmation that all mankind will be granted an opportunity for life in the general resurrection. Jesus said: “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”

Verse 25 applies to the followers of Jesus in this life: All those who exercise faith in Christ, though still subject to death, are nevertheless promised renewal of life in the resurrection.

Verse 26 applies to the world of mankind after their resurrection in the Millennium. Whosoever believes in Christ at that time and is willing to accept the divine arrangements in the kingdom era will never die again.

There are several passages of Scripture which deserve special consideration at this point. These texts have been understood to teach that unbelievers will be brought forth in the resurrection only for the purpose of being condemned and reassigned to their fate of doom. A proper understanding of the resurrection should harmonize all the promises of God pertaining to the eventual blessing of the human family during the thousand-year kingdom. Any view that falls short of this would not be honoring God’s grand purpose in restoring the dead. The whole object of the resurrection is to provide all the willing and obedient of mankind the opportunity of gaining everlasting human life.

The first of these texts which are generally misunderstood is Revelation 20:5. As it stands in the Authorized Version, it appears to contradict many of the promises of God for the blessing of humanity during the thousand-year kingdom period. It seems to place the general resurrection of the world at the very end of the Millennium, which would not permit anyone to benefit from the reign of Christ and his church. It reads, "But the rest of the dead [apart from the church] lived not again until the thousand years were finished."

The passage is of doubtful authenticity. Since it is omitted in both the Vatican and the Syriac manuscripts (the oldest copies in existence), it raises the possibility that it could be spurious and not a part of the original inspired Book of Revelation. On this basis, then, its authority could no longer be accepted as equal to that of other scriptures.

There are two other scriptures which also need to be examined. The first reads: "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." (John 5:28, 29) The second, which is similar to this, states, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Dan. 12:2) Both of these verses briefly describe the two classes in the resurrection. Both highlight the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the unrighteous.

The question at issue in these two passages is, what is the nature of the punishment inflicted upon the unbelievers who come forth in the resurrection? The *Authorized Version* defines it as "damnation" and "shame and everlasting contempt." The Greek word *krisis*, here translated "damnation" (18), is actually defined as "judgment," and the word is so translated in verses 27 and 30 of the same context. The *Revised Standard Version* renders all occurrences of the word consistently

“judgment.” A resurrection to judgment is by no means the same as one of damnation, and it actually implies that divine favor will be granted to those judged.

The Hebrew word *olam*, translated “everlasting” (19) in the expression, “everlasting contempt,” may sometimes be defined as “age-lasting.” Since an indefinite period of time is actually signified, it can change the thought of the text altogether. The scorn and contempt attached to the unrighteous will last only for an age, or for the time required by them to amend their ways. By accepting the righteous provisions and arrangements of the kingdom, these will have an opportunity gradually to improve their reputation.

When first brought back from death, this class is placed in a shameful and contemptible position because of their degraded characters and the memory of their misdeeds. By humbling themselves and becoming obedient to the laws of the kingdom, these may begin on an upward course. If they turn completely from the error of their ways to full obedience to the Lord, the contempt for their former sin will give way to a new acceptance and respect. The “age-lasting contempt” for them will then have come to an end. Of this class God will say, “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (Jer. 31:34) Thus, even these texts become harmonious with the general tenor of the Scriptures pertaining to the resurrection and the judgment.

## **WILL THERE BE ROOM?**

God’s plan calls for a resurrection of all those who have died and for their restoration upon Planet Earth. That God destined man to live comfortably upon the earth is found in Isaiah 45:18: “God ... formed the earth and made it ... he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited.” After creating the first human pair, God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.” (Gen. 1:28, *Leeser translation*). The command

was to fill the earth and not overpopulate it. Some who are practical-minded might object to the feasibility of all the dead being restored to life upon the earth, supposing that there would not be sufficient land area to support them. It may readily be shown, however, that these fears are unfounded.

There is ample space for both the living and the dead which may be verified easily by reference to the chart "Low Population Densities of Earth's Continents" and to the chart "High Population Densities of Selected World Areas." (20)

The first graph shows that today there are vast continents that are barely inhabited at all. Four continents have an average of twenty-seven people per square mile. The average density for the entire earth is only sixty-nine per square mile, which is about the same as the average in the United States. Yet a government study of this country pointed out that only one percent of the land area is being used for living purposes and an additional two percent of it for working space. (21) Think of all the emptiness that still awaits man's use!

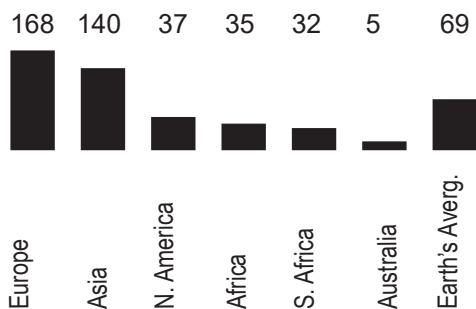
The second graph shows that it is a very feasible proposition for all the resurrected dead and the present living generation to live together comfortably upon the earth. It has been estimated by the Eugenics Department of the Carnegie Institute that some thirty billion people have lived on the earth since the beginning of recorded history about 5 thousand years ago. (22) Thirty billion people distribute evenly over the earth's land area would give a density of 53 per square mile.

Surprising as this may seem, this figure is actually lower than the density of many countries today, such as Great Britain, West Germany, Holland, and Belgium, and less than some states, such as New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. Notice that a very high standard of living is being supported today in many different world areas where the population density is



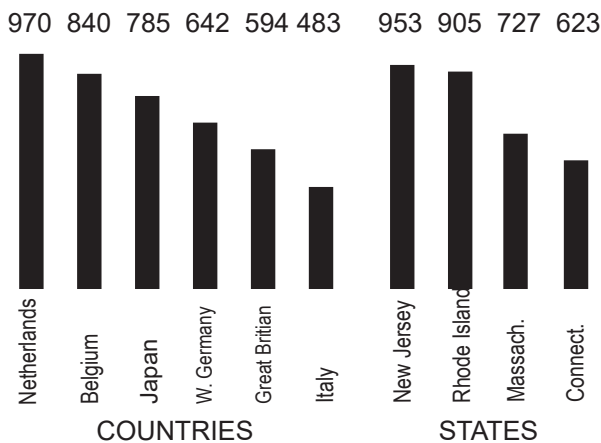
## Low Population Densities of Earth's Continents

*(People) per square mile-1976 estimate*



## High Population Densities of Selected World Areas

*(People) per square mile-1976 estimate*



greater than 530. Surely, then, the world as a whole should have little difficulty in supporting its total population during the kingdom, when man's total economy will be devoted to peaceful and profitable pursuits.

Now that it is evident that sufficient living space still remains to support comfortably both those people now living and all who died in the past, it becomes possible to appreciate a little more fully the resurrection feature of God's plan. But there is still one further objection that might be raised: Will it be possible from an agricultural standpoint to raise sufficient food to feed the resurrected billions? The Bible answers in the affirmative and provides interesting clues in predicting how this will be accomplished.

Micah 4:1-3 reads: "In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain [kingdom] of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains. ... And he shall judge among many people, ... and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks." Here in symbolic language we are told that under divine supervision the nations will direct their tremendous resources, not to war, but to peaceful and profitable pursuits, including the feeding of restored humanity.

Psalms 67:4-6 states: "O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. ... Then shall the earth yield her increase." When man's efforts are channeled constructively to solve the food problem, when modern methods of agriculture are adopted worldwide, when political animosities and jealousies no longer block food distribution, when surpluses are used and not burned or otherwise destroyed, and when new sources of energy are tapped to irrigate barren wastelands, the earth will bring forth abundantly. As predicted in Isaiah 35:1, even "the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose."

## JUDGMENT OF THE WORLD

The thousand-year kingdom period may also be considered from another standpoint. The Bible speaks of a time when God “will judge the world in righteousness by that man [Christ] whom he hath ordained.” (Acts 17:31) Contrary to tradition, the Judgment Day (epoch, or period of time) will not be a doomsday to be regarded with fear and dread by all mankind. The Judgment Day of the Bible is actually the same thousand-year day of the kingdom and millennial reign of Christ. Well has the poet written concerning it:

A thousand years! Earth's coming glory!  
 'Tis the glad day so long foretold;  
 'Tis the bright morn of Zion's glory  
 Prophets foresaw in time of old.

The Scriptures are replete with references to the Judgment Day, giving assurance that it will be a grand and desirable time in which all people will be blessed. In I Chronicles 16:31-33 it is written: “Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: ... let the fields rejoice, and all that is therein. Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the Lord, because he cometh to judge the earth.”

The psalmist adds: “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise... . Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.”—Ps. 98:4,8,9

The Apostle Paul furthers this thought of the blessedness of the Judgment Day by saying: “God ... hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness ... whereof he hath given assurance unto all men.” (Acts 17:30,31) There would be little point in giving all men assurance of a future judgment unless it were to be a favorable time for them.

Further evidence of this is given in the Old Testament description of how judges were raised up by God to execute justice and relieve oppression among the Israelites. Throughout the administration of the judges the people were blessed. For an example, see Judges 3:9-11. Concerning the future kingdom, God has promised: "I will restore thy judges as at the first." (Isa. 1:26) Then the blessing of the people will not be confined just to Israel but will be poured out upon all nations.

We believe that the Judgment Day will be a thousand-year period devoted to the education of mankind in the ways of righteousness. The Apostle Peter links the Judgment Day with a thousand years in II Peter 3:7,8. In verse 9 he says God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" during this period. "God ... will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."—1 Tim. 2:3,4

The gradual process of enlightenment is shown by these words: "When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." (Isa. 26:9) The Gospel shall be made so plain that even the fool will understand and respond: "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called, The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."—Isa. 35:8

Some matters will have to be unlearned also: "Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Micah. 4:3) Then, at the close of the thousand years, when the lessons of righteousness have been fully learned, "They shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD." (Jer. 31:34) Then also will come to pass the saying: "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."—Isa. 11:9

There will be a small group of incorrigible, however, who will stubbornly refuse to make progress toward righteousness in the Millennial Age and must suffer the consequence, which is “the second death.” In The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matt. 25:31-46), these are the ones who prove unworthy of life and are condemned to “everlasting fire,” which the Revelator says is a symbol of second death: “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whore mongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”—Rev. 21:8

At the close of the Millennium it indeed “shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.” (Acts 3:23) God will not permit the disobedience of a few individuals permanently to blight his otherwise perfect creation. Disharmony with God leads to an existence which is injurious to self and others and will therefore be justly punishable by “the second death,” which is eternal oblivion and extinction of life.

The overall view of God’s completed plan of redemption will prove to all that he has been a very successful Creator of the human race. The present Gospel Age will have represented the day of salvation for the church: “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”—II Cor. 6:2

The future Millennial Age will have afforded the opportunity for the world’s conversion: “And the Spirit [Christ] and the bride [the glorified church] say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”—Rev. 22:17

In the grand finale of God’s plan, the great majority of all the vast multitudes of humans brought into existence will have gained everlasting life. As the Scriptures

present it: "The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee."—Isa. 60:5

Some Christians object to this view of the Judgment Day, considering it to be an unwarranted second chance for the world to be saved. Not appreciating the full extent of God's love for his creatures, they feel he has restricted salvation only to the church class. Since the church is being called in this present age, it would naturally follow that all salvation would then be limited to this life.

On the basis of this understanding, consider for a moment how God's plan would be limited in its effectiveness. Think of the vast multitudes of humanity born in the pre-Christian era who never heard the Gospel or the name of Christ. Are they to be doomed just because they happened to live at the wrong time?

Consider the other billions who were never reached by the Gospel during the present age. Think, too, of the countless others who have been confused by the conflicting and contradictory messages being preached on every hand. Are all these likewise to be eternally lost?

The culmination of such a view would permit the salvation of only a relatively few of God's creatures, only those who were worthy to become members of the church class. The great majority of humanity, by circumstances largely beyond their control, would have been born to die. Thus God would be a very unsuccessful Creator if only a small percentage were to benefit from the blessings of eternal life. The poet displayed a deeper insight into the plan of God when he wrote:

"For the love of God is broader  
Than the measure of man's mind,  
And the heart of the Eternal  
Is most wonderfully kind.  
Search the Scriptures, search and see  
God's great kindness unto thee.

“But men make his love too narrow  
 By false limits of their own,  
 And they magnify his vengeance  
 With a zeal he will not own.  
 Search the Scriptures, search and see  
 God’s grand law of equity.”

This is the basic issue concerning the world’s Judgment Day. Will it truly be a thousand-year opportunity (a so-called second chance) of attaining to the moral and spiritual standards of righteousness, or will it merely be a single twenty-four-hour day designed to re-hear and re-condemn the sinners back to their fate of doom? We believe it may be clearly shown from the Scriptures that mankind as individuals never really had a first chance or full opportunity for life and that Jesus’ atoning sacrifice upon the cross guarantees this to all.

It was only Adam, the father of the human race, who was originally on trial for life and, as a result of his failure, plunged all of his posterity into the condemnation of death. The logic and justice of the ransom sacrifice require that, as the whole human race was condemned in Adam, so likewise the whole race should be redeemed in Christ. The Apostle Paul expressed this by saying: “For as by one man’s disobedience [that of Adam] many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one [that of Christ] shall many be made righteous.”—Rom. 5:19

There are additional evidences to show that the human race could not previously have had a full and fair opportunity for gaining everlasting life. The Scriptures teach that every descendant of Adam was born “in sin” and “shapen in iniquity.” (Ps. 51:5) Could it be said that anyone laboring under this handicap of inherent sin had a full or fair chance?

It is written of the present age that “darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people.” (Isa. 60:2) Not until the Millennial Age shall this veil of darkness upon the people be lifted: “He [God] will destroy in this

mountain [kingdom] the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.”—Isa. 25:7

Paul offers an explanation of why so few respond to the true Gospel in the present age by mentioning the blinding influences which hinder the people. (II Cor. 4:4) The Revelator refers to these same evil influences and predicts that they will be removed during the thousand years.—Rev. 20:2,3

In Jeremiah is found another prophecy which contrasts the present age with the kingdom age. “In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.” (Jer. 31:29,30) Today it is true that because “the fathers” (our human ancestors back to Adam) “have eaten a sour grape” (have sinned and disobeyed God’s laws), “the children’s teeth are set on edge” (we bear the penalty of condemnation and the traits of sin).

In the kingdom age, however, this saying shall be done away with. Then it will be true that whoever dies “shall die for his own iniquity.” The opportunity for life will be extended on an individual basis, and no one will be penalized for the misdeeds of an ancestor.

There are still other Bible references which explain the character of the Judgment Day. Turn to The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats recorded in Matthew 25:31-46. This parable describes those who are doing the judging, those who will be judged, and the basis of the judgment.

First, who is doing the judging? “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him ... he shall separate them one from another.” From this text it appears that Christ is judging; and other scriptures reveal that the church class will be glorified with him at that time and will share in the work of



judgment. For example, I Corinthians 6:2 reads: "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?"

In the parable the "holy angels" is a reference to the saints. The Greek word *aggelos* translated "angels" (23) actually means "messengers" or "agents," who in this instance are the resurrected saints. Compare the similar wording of another text found in Colossians 3:4, which reads, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

Since the church class is sharing in the judgment work, it becomes evident that the only ones left to be judged are the rest of mankind, those who did not attain salvation during the Gospel Age. The "sheep" and the "goats," then, are descriptive of the obedient and disobedient classes which will develop during the course of the thousand-year Judgment Day, after the world has been brought forth in the resurrection.

Those who are willing to conform themselves to the laws of God and strive to overcome the sinful tendencies left over from the present life will be eligible for the reward: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."—vs. 34

The parable continues by showing that those who are unwilling to change their ways and to imbibe God's law of love, shown in their lack of helpfulness toward their fellowmen, will be condemned to the second death, here shown by the symbol of "everlasting fire": "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." (vs. 41) This agrees with the text already cited that "every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."—Acts 3:23

One more picture of the Judgment Day should be examined. It is a description of the dead being judged by the things "written in the books," found in Revelation

20:12: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: ... and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

Do these books contain an account of all the deeds of men, good and bad, committed in the present life? We do not think so. From God's standpoint all men are already condemned through Adam; on the basis of their own deeds none would be worthy of life. "There is none righteous, no, not one."—Rom. 3:10

These books are a symbol of the will of God. As the books are opened, God's will is revealed to men. During the Judgment Day the books will be continuously open so that men may pattern their works after the things "written in the books." This harmonizes with the text recorded in Joel 2:28: "It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh."

Today, the books of the Bible contain the greatest expression of God's will, but their understanding remains a mystery to most people. During the thousand years, the principles of truth and righteousness which they contain will be fully understood by all. The final judgment of the world will be upon the basis of their response and obedience to the things "written in the books" after they are made plain to the people.

Are the works of the present life, then, of any consequence if all men are to receive their first real opportunity in the next age anyway? Yes, they certainly are! Every thought and act has an influence upon the character that is being developed now. Each individual will come forth in the general resurrection with the same thoughts, motives, and habits that he had before he died. The progress that he makes toward righteousness during the Judgment Day will depend to a large extent upon the character that he developed in the present life. These habits and responses ingrained within him will serve either to help or hinder him in his day of trial.

Yes, the Bible teaches that the works of the present life are not forgotten: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Gal. 6:7) "He that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required."—Luke 12:48

Those people who endeavor to do what is right in this life and who pattern their actions along the principles of the Golden Rule will find it comparatively easy to obey God's requirements in the kingdom. (Matt. 7:12) On the other hand, those who have deliberately shunned doing what is right and seared their consciences by repeatedly dealing unjustly with their fellowmen will develop a character in which the tendency to do evil has become deeply rooted. These will find it extremely difficult to amend their ways and will labor heavily under Christ's "iron rule" of justice over the nations.

Of this latter class it is written: "Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." (Isa. 26:10) It behooves all, then, to strive for righteous dealings and ethical conduct in the present life, to insure a favorable final judgment in the life to come.

Thus is pictured the world's great Judgment Day. The correct understanding of this subject gives due honor and praise to the God who planned it. Perhaps no other feature of his plan of salvation does so much to emphasize the heights and depths of the love of God toward his human creatures.

We cannot help but stand in awe before the long-suffering and merciful nature of our God, who "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" 1 Tim. 2:4; Rom. 11:33

# The Kingdom of God

## Part IV

*“And 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.”—Revelation 21:4*

### **PEACE, LIFE, RESTORATION**

“Hope springs eternal in the human breast,” wrote Alexander Pope and so it has been in regard to man’s longing for worldwide peace. Yet as the pages of history are examined, each one is found to be stained with the blood of those who have fallen victim to the ceaseless struggles of the nations.

“Throughout history there has been little difference in the frequency of war. The period from 1496 B.C. to A.D. 1861 shows 227 years of peace to 3,130 of war. The story of Western civilization, from Greece to the League of Nations, shows an average interval between wars of only two years, although individual countries show considerable variation.” (24) Notwithstanding this bleak record of the past, men are ever hoping for a better day.

Undoubtedly a vital source of man’s hope for peace has been the message of the angels, given at the birth of Jesus, and recorded in Luke 2:14: “On earth peace, goodwill toward men.” For many years Christians have firmly believed that this message of the Bible was applicable to the world in this age. Almost every Christmas

sermon held out world peace as an inevitable result of Christianity and its influence.

These promises kept the spark of hope alive, but they ended in keen disappointment when again and again the nations resorted to the use of force and warfare to settle their differences. Some have even forsaken the churches because the promises offered have not materialized and the hopes raised have been rudely crushed.

Are the prophecies of world peace and goodwill to be considered as only visionary and actually incapable of fulfillment? Today, students of the Bible have come to the realization that there is nothing wrong with the prophecies but that it is their application which needs correcting. Now it is understood that the Bible's message of peace belongs to the Millennial Age, when God's kingdom is established upon the earth. There is no authority in the Word of God for holding out any promise of world peace during this present Gospel Age.

There is much that testifies to the validity of this conclusion. Jesus himself said to his disciples that one of the evidences of his return would be the turmoil and strife at the end of the age: "Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars ... for all these things must come to pass. ... For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." (Matt. 24:6,7) Over and over again through the annals of history the cry has gone out: "Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up."—Joel 3:9,10

Is it not reasonable to assume that the earthly peace and goodwill mentioned at the time of the birth of the Savior would not commence until the Prince of Peace himself had returned in grandeur and glory? A close examination of the prophecies shows that the divine government of the kingdom will be needed to establish everlasting peace and harmony upon earth. Only through the exercise of such divine power and by direct intervention in the affairs of men will it ever be possible

for the inhabitants of the earth to abide peacefully with their neighbors.

Attention will first be given to two prophecies relating to the birth of Jesus. Luke 2:14, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men," becomes understandable when compared with Isaiah 9:6,7: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called ...The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end."

Notice how the peace prophesied at the birth of Jesus is inseparably linked with the establishment of his government or kingdom. During his first advent Jesus expressly said that his kingdom was not then to be established. (John 18:36) It was not until the nobleman in The Parable of the Pounds went away and returned the second time that the kingdom was to be set up and the reign begun.—Luke 19:11,12

It might be asked, just how will God's kingdom bring about the condition of universal peace? It will be accomplished by enforcing principles of truth and standards of righteousness on both a local and international scale. Divine force will at first be needed to put down all contrary rule and authority. "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."—Ps. 46:8-10

It is not until God will "judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off," that man will realize that God's decrees are to be enforced. (Mic. 4:3) He has determined that wars shall forever cease and that the incalculable suffering and horror they have caused shall never again be repeated.

It will require a rule of iron to accomplish this feat, which is to be carried out by Christ and his glorified church. (Ps. 2:6-12) Of that time the Scriptures declare, "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet."—Isa. 28:17

Very exacting indeed will be the requirements to obey and to desist from former ways of violence, warfare, and injustice. Only thus will the nations consent to "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks," and not until the Millennial Age will it be true that "nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."—Mic. 4:3

Before the millennial reign will have proceeded very long, the inhabitants of the earth will begin to appreciate its many blessings. Not the least of these will be the peace and serenity enjoyed by all in God's kingdom, when even fear itself will be abolished: "The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."—Ps. 37:11

"In his days [during Christ's millennial reign] shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth."—Ps. 72:7,8

"They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid."—Mic. 4:4

"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [kingdom], saith the Lord."—Isa. 65:25

As the work of the kingdom progresses still further, man's appreciation of the boundless love and mercy of his Creator will result in his actively desiring to do the will of God. Welling up within his heart will be the inclination to help his fellowman and to love his neighbor as himself. When the disposition of man will thus be changed, peace and harmony will be everywhere evident.

No longer will it be because of divine command and enforcement, but because it has become man's new desire

and an integral part of his transformed heart. "After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."—Jer. 31:33

Today man's fallen condition prevents him from establishing peace. "Human nature remains the basic ingredient in war-making. The psychological causes of war operate unceasingly because we are still essentially the creatures of our emotions. Anger, pugnacity, greed, prejudice—these come into play ... in relation to other causes of conflict." (25)

But, thank God, these emotions are to be replaced by those of love, benevolence, kindness, generosity, and unselfishness, as the inhabitants of the earth learn righteousness in the kingdom. No obstacle will then remain to prevent the establishment of lasting and universal peace among all people.

"Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."—Isa. 32:16-18

## **EVERLASTING LIFE AND HAPPINESS**

Everlasting life is man's most cherished hope and dream! Will it ever become a reality? Is there provision in the plan of God for such a desire as this? The Bible answers yes, but not in the way that many have been led to believe.

Tradition, with its roots in the ensnaring web of pagan philosophy, has taught that man is, by his very nature, immortal. When he dies, it is said, he does not actually experience death or the extinction of life but merely enters upon a new form of life, either higher or lower. The teaching of the Bible repudiates this concept by its plain statements:



"The soul that sinneth, it shall die."—Ezek. 18:4,20

"There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."—Eccles. 9:10

"The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing."—Eccles. 9:5

"His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish."—Ps. 146:4

The first man Adam was endowed with the physical capability of living forever. He was created perfect and, in his Edenic surroundings, was supplied with all that was necessary to sustain his existence. There was just one requirement, however, which had to be fulfilled. God desired that his perfect human creation render perfect obedience to his commands. This Adam failed to do. As a result, death was imposed as the penalty for disobedience. Gen 3:19,22. "The wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6:23) Through Adam's fall, the entire human race was made subject to the tentacles of the dreaded enemy, Death.

"The horror of death is universal among mankind. It depends not so much on the pain that often accompanies dissolution as upon the mystery of it and the results to the subject and to the survivors—the cessation of the old familiar relations between them, and the decomposition of the body. This horror has given rise to an obstinate disbelief in the necessity of death, and to attempts, continually repeated in spite of invariably disastrous experiences of failure, to escape it. ... The picture thus presented of the desperate refusal of mankind to accept a cardinal condition of existence is one of the most pathetic in the history of the race." (26)

Yes, man has had good cause to fear death, and throughout history he has endeavored to postpone its realities. The early explorers of this continent searched diligently for the Fountain of Youth, thought to be situated in the New World. Today, the dream of extending man's life span has shifted from legend to laboratory.

In our day, medical research is focused on the age-old problem of mortality, and efforts to extend the span of human life have had some measure of success. This is mostly due to improvements in sanitation, the discovery of antibiotics, and more effective medical care. The average life span and life expectancy in the United States have grown dramatically in this century, from about 47 years in 1900 to about 75 years in 1990. Now, as scientists make headway against chronic diseases like cancer and heart disease, some think it can be extended even further. (27)

Nevertheless, the fact that about 150,000 people are still dying every day shows that there is no escape from the Grim Reaper outside of the provisions which have been made by a loving God.

With this background of the origin of death and man's fruitless efforts to oppose it, consider now the only true source of hope. It is, of course, the Bible, in its revelation of a loving God who has designed a master plan of salvation. His plan provides for all the dead to come forth in the resurrection and to be given an opportunity to gain everlasting human life.

As previously outlined, the ransom sacrifice of Christ guarantees this opportunity to all. Recall the text in I Timothy 2:5, 6: "The man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." The due time for this testimony and the occasion for exercising the option of attaining everlasting life will be during the Millennial or Kingdom Age.

When all mankind will be granted an individual trial for life in the great thousand-year Judgment Day, there will be one universal law to follow: "Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear [obey], and your soul shall live." (Isa. 55:3) Obedience to the just principles of God's laws then in effect will be the key to all lasting human happiness.

It will also result in everlasting life for as many of the redeemed as are willing to comply with these laws. Only

thus will "the desire of all nations" come, and man's longing for peace, happiness, and everlasting life be finally satisfied.—Hag. 2:7

In commenting on the longevity of life during the Millennium, Jesus said, "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead. ... can [not] die any more." (Luke 20:35,36) What did he mean by that statement? Should it be understood that when brought back to the full measure of perfection through God's kingdom arrangements, man will become immortal? We believe not.

Death, as an entity or principle, will always exist. That is, the possibility of a human being dying because of disobedience to God will always be present through the endless ages of eternity. Nevertheless, it is understood from Jesus' statement that after the brief testing period of the close of the Millennium, none of the redeemed will ever again deflect from God.—Rev. 20:7,8

The question then arises, why will the majority of mankind obey God after the kingdom is established, whereas Adam failed to do so originally? Experience will prove to have made the difference. Adam had never experienced sin or the dreadful results of disobedience.

The world of mankind will have benefited from a two-fold experience, first during the present life with evil and the results of disobedience, and later, in the Millennial Age, with good and the virtues of obeying the laws of God. With such a background of experience to help him, man will always desire to serve God and righteousness and consequently will live on indefinitely.

When God's plan of salvation is completed, both the church class and the world of mankind will have benefited from the blessings of everlasting life. There will be a vast difference in the nature and characteristics of this life, however. Immortality in the proper sense of the word will be given only to the church class. Everlasting human, or mortal, life will be apportioned to the world of mankind.

The kind of life which the church class will inherit is comparable to that with which God himself, the great Fountain of all life, is endowed. God is a spirit being who inherently possesses the highest form of life, immortality, on the divine plane of being. This kind of life springs from within itself, is not dependent upon any other source, and is death proof.—John 4:24; 5:26; I Tim. 1:17; 6:16

Who would dare to aspire to such a life unless the Scriptures made it abundantly clear that God intends to share the divine nature and has extended an invitation to such a position? In the Bible, immortality is ascribed only to God, Jesus Christ, and the church class. It is never mentioned in connection with mankind in general.

It represents the very highest reward for faithfulness that could be granted: "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life." (Rom. 2:7) "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature."—II Pet. 1:4

What kind of everlasting life, then, will the world of mankind be granted, if not immortality? It will be mortality, or mortal life, in the correct sense of the word. Today this word is generally misused to describe the state of human life in which death is unavoidable. All around us is witnessed the inevitability of death, leading to the conclusion that all mortals, or human beings, must die. But this is true only under the present reign of sin and death, which will soon be ended in the kingdom, when "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."—I Cor. 15:26

Mortality then will be a condition of perfect human life which will continue forever, so long as man maintains his obedience to the Creator. It will always be dependent upon a higher source for its existence. As already discussed, death will still be a possibility, but not an inevitability, and indeed not a probability.

Apart from gaining everlasting life, still other blessings will accrue to man in the kingdom. Reflect for a moment on the plight of humanity through the centuries. Think of all the misery, heartache, suffering, selfishness, sickness, and pain that have afflicted man in his deplorable fallen condition. All these are traits of imperfection which accompanied the death sentence and have run parallel to it.

When mankind is released from the bondage of death, these other stains of sin will gradually be removed as the world comes into harmony with the ways of God. The nighttime of suffering will be over and the majority of mankind will be eager to look upward for divine deliverance. "For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favor is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."—Ps. 30:5

Thus the benefits of the kingdom will include not only everlasting life but an enjoyment of that life to its fullest possible extent. Pain, sorrow, and sickness will flee into the background memory of the past, never again to mar the glorious state of man in his perfection. "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." (Isa. 33:24) "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."—Rev. 21:4

Yes, God's favor in the millennial morning will result in resurrection, righteous judgment, universal peace, everlasting life, and freedom from sickness and pain. In a setting such as this, far exceeding all the cherished hopes and dreams of the philosophers and reformers of all ages, no wonder people will be happy!

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams

in the desert. ... And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”—Isa. 35:5,6,10

## **HARMONY WITH THE CREATOR**

Thus far we have viewed the establishment of God's kingdom upon the earth as a future progressive event unparalleled in the history of the world. In the completed sense, this future kingdom will represent a restoration of that which already existed in the initial period of man's creation. The early chapters of Genesis describe the establishment of the first kingdom and the circumstances leading to its withdrawal. The closing chapters of Revelation, in highly pictorial language, depict the restoration of that kingdom and its glorious benefits to man.

The process of bringing the alienated human race back into accord with God is called the doctrine of the atonement. The necessity for the atonement is one of the most fundamental teachings in the Bible. Over and over again is repeated the theme of man's fall, his need of a Redeemer, the sacrificial work of Christ, and finally the coming kingdom as the agency to accomplish the needed conciliation. In many circles today, however, the plain teachings of the Bible regarding the fall of man and his present state of alienation from God are made light of and discounted as too primitive a belief to be retained in modern theology. The authenticity of the whole Genesis account of the entrance of sin into the world is repudiated by labeling the book as mythology, noteworthy only for its literary style. Man is pictured as making steady progress toward the sublime state as a result of his own exalted efforts.

But how differently the Scriptures view the matter! The Book of Genesis shows that Adam was originally created in the mental and moral image of God. He was

placed in a garden-like environment “eastward in Eden,” flourishing with the vegetation needed to sustain life. He was given dominion over all the lower animals, whether creatures of the air, land, or sea. In effect, Adam was a king of an earthly kingdom which had been established for him by God.

His conversing with God in the cool of the evening demonstrated the fellowship and communion which he enjoyed with the Creator as one of his sons on the human plane of existence. Here was a picture of perfect tranquillity and harmony existing between man and his Creator in the original kingdom of God.

How quickly this scene was changed, however, when Adam transgressed the law of God! He lost the right to reside in the earthly paradise which had been his. Thorns and thistles and the sweat of his brow as he labored for a living were to become his lot. Under the sentence of death, physical, mental, and moral decay began to set in, each day carrying him farther away from the original state of perfection.

Under these circumstances of condemnation and imperfection, he also lost the right of fellowshiping directly with his Creator. Thus was forfeited the original kingdom of God and earthly paradise, a permanent loss, were it not for a plan of salvation designed by a loving God.

This is the Genesis account of the creation and fall of man. If it is mere mythology and cannot be depended upon as the inspired Word of God, then the foremost personalities of the Christian church have been deceived. Jesus frequently cited incidents mentioned in Genesis in his own personal ministry among the Jews, such as in Matthew 23:35 when he referred to Abel, and Matthew 24:37 when he spoke of Noah.

And the great Apostle Paul confirmed the creation account when he wrote, “The first man Adam was made a living soul.” (I Cor. 15:45) Whom, then, are we to

believe? We prefer to side with Jesus and Paul, accept the Book of Genesis as authentic, and observe that those who try to discredit it are not benefiting by the enlightenment which it provides.

Another objection has been advanced by those who deny man's need for atonement. Their argument is that God should simply forgive man for a disobedient act, especially for a first offense. Thus, if the account of man's fall in the Garden of Eden be true, God should have immediately reinstated him to favor. This objection seems somewhat plausible on the surface. The basic question to be resolved is, could God have forgiven his wayward human creation without requiring an atoning sacrifice?

Before this question can be answered, it will be necessary to provide a background sketch of the character of the Creator and of the setting of man's creation. The Bible describes God as an invisible spirit being, possessing grand attributes of character which are in perfect balance with each other. Briefly, the chief characteristics of God are wisdom, justice, love, and power. All these attributes are constantly working together in every act in which God is engaged. As the great Sovereign of the universe, God conducts all his affairs in perfect harmony with each of these four basic attributes.

Consider now how these must have reacted to the impulse of simply forgiving the transgression of man: divine wisdom at once would have foreseen the dangers of such a course. God had originally declared that the penalty for disobedience would be death. If he now altered the consequences, others of God's intelligent creatures, as well as man, would conclude that God was changeable and his word not trustworthy. The Scriptures expressly declare that in God there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."—James 1:17

Further, divine justice pointed to God's position as the Lawgiver of the universe. He is the great King of



many creations on various planes of existence in addition to that of man. Man's disobedience to the just laws of his Creator represented a rebellion in one quarter of the vast universe. It had to be dealt with fairly and strictly in accordance with those laws. Could one measure of justice be meted out to man and another to the remainder of creation? No, divine justice demanded the same standard, which was an exacting one of full obedience to the divine will. Justice, then, required that the death penalty be carried out as originally imposed.

Divine love desired that man should be fully forgiven. God's mercy and compassion had already provided a way of meeting the strict requirements of his justice. The solution was a plan of salvation (conceived before the creation of man) centering around a substitutionary sacrifice to be offered on behalf of Adam. The Son of God, would be commissioned to perform this task, to which he willingly consented.

He would undergo a change of nature from the spiritual to the human state. He would become a ransom, an exact equivalent to Adam in his perfection, and then voluntarily offer his life as an atoning sacrifice. "Ye were ... redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained [foreknown] before the foundation of the world." (I Pet. 1:18-20; Heb. 10:5-7) Thus would divine justice be fully satisfied, since a perfect human life was to be offered for the transgression of Adam.

Thus, too, the life of Adam would not be forfeited forever but would be restored in the resurrection on the basis of the merit of the Redeemer. And not only Adam, of course, but the entire human race condemned in him would benefit from such a plan.

This, then, is the method which God adopted to begin the work of atonement. It carries a logic which at once satisfies the reasoning of the inquirer for truth, and counters all objections that are raised against it. It is a

plan to which all the attributes of God's character can give wholehearted consent. And the great power of the Almighty One is pledged to carry it out.

Thus it is seen that man will ultimately be forgiven, but through a course which provides him with a valuable lesson in the results of disobedience to the divine will. It is a pathway which leads from condemnation in Adam to justification in Christ.

## **FURTHER PROOF**

If the doctrine of the atonement is fundamental, then it should be possible to produce additional scriptural support for it throughout the Bible. Evidence should be available showing the present fallen state of man, the method God has devised to redeem and restore him, and the final outcome of the application and execution of such a plan. Consider first the following texts to determine whether man is described as being in a condition out of harmony with God:

"By the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; ... by one man's disobedience many were made sinners."—Rom. 5:18,19

"We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. ... They are all gone out of the way."—Rom 3:9-12

"Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."—James 4:4

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."—Rom. 5:8,9

Is not the conclusion self-evident? All mankind is described as sinful, unrighteous, at enmity with God, and under his condemnation and wrath. The only exception to this general rule is the church class. All dedicated

believers, on the basis of their faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on their behalf, are justified, or reckoned acceptable in God's sight. All others stand separate from the righteousness and perfection of God, wholly condemned before the divine bar of justice.

Originally the only separating influence between God and man was the sentence of death for disobedience. Now—as a result of the accumulated effect of many years of alienation and sin—degradation and depravity have set in, removing man still farther away from the divine image.

As a result of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, all men are guaranteed an awakening from the dead. As previously shown, however, all will return from the tomb with the same character which had been developed in this life. Even the noblest individuals will have some measure of imperfection, and the average lot of man no doubt will display a considerable tinge of sin.

Unless, therefore, God were to provide some means of assistance, all men would immediately be re-condemned to death. Their imperfection would prevent them from rendering full obedience to the divine will and would only lead to a renewed condemnation. Thank God, provision has already been made in the divine plan to permit the temporary shielding of all humanity during the thousand-year kingdom while the great work of restoration proceeds.

Jesus Christ and his church will act in the capacity of Mediator between God and man. They will act in a manner similar to that of Moses during the inauguration of the Old or Law Covenant with the nation of Israel. When this covenant was originally instituted, Moses was selected by God to come up on the mount of Sinai and obtain the tables of the Law direct from God.

Before he set forth the Law to the people, Moses sprinkled the tables of the Law with the blood of sacrificed animals. If the Israelites had been able to live up to the

requirements of this covenant in full obedience to the will of God, they would have received everlasting life.

This entire proceeding foreshadowed a much greater and more beneficial arrangement. Jeremiah 31:31-33 states: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. ... After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."

Thus God will establish a New Covenant with man, starting with Israel and finally encompassing all the families of the earth.

Instead of Moses, there will be Christ and the church to act as the Mediator of this covenant. "Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant." (Heb. 12:24) "God ... hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation."—II Cor. 5:18

Jesus and the church class will be in Mt. Zion, a symbol of the spiritual phase of the kingdom, administering the affairs and laws of that kingdom. Instead of the blood of animals, there will be the merit of the blood of Jesus, which will make the New Covenant possible and eventually take away the sin of the world. The Mediator will set forth the laws and regulations of the kingdom and assist all those who are willing to come to a full knowledge of the truth. Thus all will be informed of their privilege to return to harmony with God and gain everlasting life.

Jeremiah continues: "They shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will remember their sin no more."—Jer. 31:34

There is yet another beautiful picture of the great work of sin removal in the kingdom period, found in the experiences of the Israelites under the old Law

Covenant. To compensate for the inability of the people to live up to the requirements of the Law, God instituted tabernacle sacrifices, which typically cleansed the people of their sins. The high priest offered the sacrifices of specified animals, which were accepted by God as an atonement for sin. When the sacrifices were completed, the priest came out before an assembly of all the people to extend a blessing.

Jesus is referred to in Scripture as the great High Priest (Heb. 4:14), and his true followers as his underpriests. (Rev. 20:6) The faithful sacrifices of the church class during this life qualify them to become underpriests in the Millennial Age. As priests of God, they will reign together with Jesus for the express purpose of blessing the masses of humanity returning from the grave.

As a result of receiving instruction in the ways of righteousness and acting in harmony with it, the world will gradually be restored to the original state of perfection as represented in Adam. At the end of the thousand years they will be fully cleansed of all imperfection and enabled to stand in the presence of God without the need of a Mediator.

There is an interesting text of Scripture bearing on the restoration of man's lost dominion, which has generally been overlooked by most Christians. It is found in Acts 3:20, 21: "And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Here is a clear statement connecting the second advent of Christ with blessings of restitution—a restoration of all that was lost in the fall of man.

Notice that this text cannot apply to the church, which is promised a new thing—the reward of the divine nature. It does apply to the whole world of mankind, who will be

blessed by a restoration of that which was lost—perfect human life with abundance. During the times of restitution, man will regain his original state of perfection, a mental and moral likeness of God, the dominion of earth, and harmony with the Creator.

Not only was this statement made by the Apostle Peter, but, as he points out, it has been spoken by the mouth of all God's holy prophets since the world began. How strange, then, that more Christians have not understood that the kingdom era was designed to be one of blessing and benefit for man.

Other scriptures elaborate further on how the church class will be used in accomplishing man's restoration. The call of the church was not intended to result in the selfish enjoyment of heavenly bliss. Rather, the church was designed by God to act as his instrument in blessing all the families of the earth.

One of the earliest evidences of this is found in the Old Testament, in God's promise of blessing to Abraham. God said to him: "I will bless thee, and ... I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore. ... And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 22:17,18) The Apostle Paul later explained that the "Seed" mentioned in this promise was in reality Christ and also his church. He wrote: "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."—Gal. 3:29

How will Christ and the church accomplish the blessing of all the families of the earth? The essential features of the work they will accomplish during the millennial kingdom have already been touched upon. The method to be used is summed up in Isaiah 49: 8-10:

"Thus saith the Lord ... I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are

in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them."

Within the wording of this text are hidden rich gems of truth. The broad outlines of the entire work of reconciliation to be carried on by Christ and his glorified church are found therein. God's purpose for the church is shown in its position as Mediator of a covenant with the people. The people to be blessed by this New Covenant are not just those who happen to be living at the time but include all that are in the grave.

To these "prisoners," bound by the shackles of sin, ignorance, superstition, and death, it will be the privilege of the church class to say: "Go forth, ... show yourselves." This is another way of expressing the resurrection of the dead and the enlightenment which will accompany it and be available to all during the kingdom.

The inhabitants at that time "shall not hunger nor thirst," not only because of the abundance of natural food, but also because they will be nourished and sustained by the truth of God's Word. Through processes of instruction and judgment, all mankind will be led back to the ways of God and to harmony with him.

"Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."—1 Cor. 15:24-26

What is the "end" mentioned here? Not the end of time or the end of the earth. It is the grand finale of the thousand-year reign of Christ and the church. It represents the climax of God's great plan of salvation, marking the

moment when the earthly creation will have been fully purified and brought back to the perfection lost in the fall.

The mediatorial reign will then have accomplished its objective, and the need for the Mediator will have ceased. When Christ returns the kingdom to the Father, man will again stand directly before his Creator to enjoy all the benefits of human sonship. Reconciliation between God and man will be complete.

“God be merciful unto us and bless us and cause his face to shine upon us. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. ... Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear [reverence] him.”—Ps. 67:1-7