Our Defiled Earth
and the Broken Covenant

"The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant."
—Isaiah 24:5

MANY CENTURIES AGO THE Prophet Isaiah, pointing forward in time to the inevitable effects of mankind's downward spiral into sin and death, speaks of our earth as being in a state of utter defilement under its sin-sick and dying inhabitants. Furthermore, he indicates that this disastrous condition has come about as the ultimate consequence of mankind's disobedient first parents—father Adam and mother Eve. Because of their failure to obey the commandments of God, succeeding generations of men until now have suffered alienation from their loving Creator of heaven and earth. Fallen man has thus been responsible for the violation and setting aside of the Divine laws and ordinances of God, and the breaking of his everlasting covenant for man.

This subsequent alienation from God is further corroborated by the Prophet Hosea, who identifies father Adam as the one responsible for breaking the

covenant that God had written in his heart. The prophet explains, "They like men [Adam, *Marginal Translation*] have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me."—Hos. 6:7

DEFILED AND POLLUTED

In our featured text, Isaiah is addressing the 'defiled' earth. However, an examination of the Hebrew word which has been translated defiled in the *King James Version*, is also defined as something having been 'profaned or polluted' [*Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*; #2610, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*]. This word has been translated profaned, defiled, and other variations of meaning, whereas the translators of the *New American Standard Bible* have used the word "polluted" in the prophet's text. The thought of pollution suggests an interesting perspective concerning some of the foretold events that were to occur in connection with the end of the present Gospel Age.

Other scriptures using this same word [#2610, *Strong's*] are referenced here for comparison and study. The word was used in the fourth book of Moses where we read, "You shall not pollute [#2610, *Strong's*] the land in which you are; for blood pollutes [#2610, *Strong's*] the land and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it." (Num. 35:33, *NASB*) In another comparison text, the psalmist used the same word when he wrote, "And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted [#2610, *Strong's*] with blood."—Ps. 106:38

THE SOBERING FACT

Considering mankind's fallen and degenerate state, it is a sobering fact that if they were left unhindered and free to continue with their proud and selfish devices, the human family would eventually destroy themselves and their own environment in the process. This fact is forcefully brought to our attention by the words of our Lord Jesus himself, when he prophesied concerning some of the events that would transpire during our day at the end of the present Gospel Age. He said, "Except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days."—Mark 13:20

LOOMING CATASTROPHES

In fulfillment of our Lord's prophetic words, we are now witnesses of an ever-looming catastrophe that is about to take place between nations on a scale never before seen. There is an increasingly dangerous level of violence and corruption in our world, with the potential for using armaments of mass destruction. The attempt to procure these devastating means of destruction includes chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons, which are now openly and aggressively being obtained by rogue nations and numerous terrorist groups around the world.

Our day is also marked by impending environmental catastrophes that appear ever larger on the horizon. Some of these conditions have come about because of man's pride and selfishness, as predicted to take place at the end of this age. The prospect for disaster among peoples and their environment appears more imminent and threatening now than

it has ever been since the beginning of man's creation. It must be acknowledged that the days foretold by Jesus nearly two thousand years ago are now evident, and if the Heavenly Father did not have all things under control by shortening the days with his powerful hand, no flesh would survive the coming chaos.

TECHNOLOGY AND POLLUTION

One of the major and contributing factors in connection with the catastrophes that are coming upon the world has gained increasing momentum during the twentieth century, and particularly in recent decades. Dramatic changes have taken place in our modern society as a result of new advances in technology. These improvements in the way we all live have generally produced an easier lifestyle for many, with the introduction of numerous laborsaving devices and other types of luxuries. This has been especially true in the western world, although it has also been prevalent in all sectors of the world to some degree. There has generally been little concern, however, for the long-term effects of some of these technological advances that are, in many cases, either directly or indirectly contributing to the destruction of our earth's environment.

The overall benefits that have accrued toward mankind in our modern industrial society seem to have peaked in recent years. There is now increasing evidence that careless consumption of natural resources of all kinds, and the inevitable consequences of its accompanying pollution, must be addressed. Man has come to realize that no personal benefits can survive this level of carelessness indefinitely,

especially in a world that is being continually plagued by pollution and other manmade disasters. The question often arises as to how to restore our planet.

SEEKING ANSWERS

The growing environmental predicament has been brought to the attention of intelligent people who have studied the problems in depth. Their conclusions are difficult to implement because human selfishness continues to play an important role. Arriving at worthwhile solutions, therefore, involves an unselfish international commitment, spending large sums of money, and long-term planning to preserve our natural environment. Solutions are needed quickly, because without a healthy, pollution-free environment there will inevitably be a growing, chronically ill population.

As cities continue to grow larger, the development of suburbs has created increased traffic congestion and the burning of fossil fuels. Massive new road construction has abruptly changed the countryside. What was once open country only a few decades ago has undergone the destruction of forests and farmland, together with increased pollution of air, soil, and water. Although pollution problems affect everyone, the human creation tends to be self-destructive, with short-term planning for maximum gain.

GLOBAL WARMING

One of the major environmental disasters confronting the world today is global warming, and there is much concern that this is a growing and widespread crisis. Although some of these changes to earth's environment have come about through

natural causes, others are occurring as a result of man's carelessness, and his inability and unwillingness to act swiftly to help curb the problem. In an effort to address the short and long-term effects of global warming and its effects upon our climate, weather specialists and scientists from around the world have, in recent years, begun to analyze and seek solutions to the growing problem. Studies show that it is important to address the problem as quickly as possible and to put forward major international efforts to curb the forecast and devastating effects.

GREENHOUSE GASES

One major study issued recently concludes that without rapid and substantial spending on a worldwide basis, global warming will ultimately create widespread devastation to earth's food sources which are dependent upon the environment. As a result of interfered climatic conditions, earth's population may become its inevitable victims in the future. Acting quickly, however, could possibly help in bringing about meaningful control of one of the major problems—greenhouse gases—at an annual cost of 1% of global gross domestic product, according to the report. Thus far, comprehensive international cooperation on this important issue that affects everyone, has proven to be elusive, and the present administration of the United States government has argued that attempts to control these greenhouse gases is too costly and most likely would be ineffective.

The report examines the consequences of failing to act on the issue. It states that rising temperatures resulting in greenhouse gases have largely come about from the burning of fossil fuels, and the

deforestation of large areas of the world, such as the Amazon rain forest region of South America.

DISASTROUS FORECAST

A news article which addresses a recent British Global Warming Report relates the chilling economic forecast for a world that fails to spend heavily, and quickly, to curb greenhouse gases. The report appears under the title, "Pay Now or Later for Warming," and was published in the *Los Angeles Times* (October 31, 2006). Its author, Kim Murphy, a *Times* staff writer, points out some of the disastrous consequences that the studies' conclusions indicate will dramatically affect earth's future climatic and weather patterns.

Murphy writes, "The current level of greenhouse gases is already 54% higher than it was before the Industrial Revolution, and could be double that level as early as 2035, the report suggests. Such an increase could raise temperatures by more than 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit by mid-century and a disastrous 9 degrees by century's end, it says.

"The result would be melting glaciers that trigger floods and reduced snow packs that supply drinking water, threatening a sixth of the world's population, the report says. Other effects would include reduced crop yields, leaving hundreds of millions of people unable to produce or purchase sufficient food; an increase in vector-borne diseases; up to 200 million people displaced because of rising sea levels and drought; and the possible extinction of 15% to 40% of species.

"Poor countries will bear the brunt of the effects of climate change, the report says, but it suggests

that rich countries must bear 60% to 80% of the responsibility for emissions reductions."

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Amid growing concern about global climate changes, attempts are being made in some places to combat the problem. Recently the California State Legislature gave final approval to "AB 32," a bill designed for this purpose. *Los Angeles Times* staff writers Janet Wilson and Marla Cone, in an article (September 1, 2006) "What Bill Would Do, Who's Affected," write, "AB 32 requires California's Air Resources Board to develop a program to reduce the state's greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, a cut of about 25% from today's levels. Reductions will be required starting in 2012. Globally, power plants and office buildings produce about two-thirds of greenhouse gas emissions, and cars and trucks produce much of the rest."

There are major obstacles, however, to meeting the goals of AB 32. It is unlikely that if the state of California was to aggressively implement these proposals that it would have much long-term effect on the country as a whole. Reflecting on this and other obstructions, Wilson and Cone report, "The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has declined to support a California tailpipe emissions-control law, which is being challenged in court by automakers. Moreover, the EPA has chosen not to classify greenhouse gas emissions as pollutants, a decision being challenged in court by the Sierra Club and several states. The bill allows the governor to extend the deadline by as much as one year, in the event of extraordinary circumstances, catastrophic

events, or threat of significant harm. Of course, the Legislature could always pass a new bill to change the law."

OUR CHANGING WORLD

As an eye-opening indication of the related affects of global warming and greenhouse gas emissions now prevalent in our earth, an article submitted by Eugene Linden in *Parade Magazine* (June 25, 2006) appears under the title "Why You Can't Ignore the Changing Climate." Linden writes, "As we learned last year in New Orleans, weather can be a weapon of mass destruction. Scientists say the climate is changing in ways that could produce many more super-hurricanes, as well as extreme floods, droughts, and heat waves that could threaten our way of life. Still, it's easy to ignore the signs of global warming because we've always had crazy weather. Unfortunately, many of the predicted changes have begun, and they already affect our health, and pocketbooks. We ignore them to our peril.

"Every year since 1997 has been in the Top 10 list of hottest years, and 2005 set a record. The earth has warmed about 1.4 degrees F. since the late 19th century, and the warming has accelerated during the past four decades. That increase sounds small, but it has been sufficient to make weather records fall by the thousands. Extreme storms like the one that flooded New England in May are becoming more frequent. Birds are migrating earlier. Trees are blooming, and flowers and crops are popping up unseasonably early across the country."

Linden further points out, "The fastest warming is taking place in the far north, where glaciers are

receding and permafrost is proving to be not so permanent. You may think this isn't relevant to those of us farther south, but snow and ice play a big role in balancing earth's climate by reflecting sunlight back into space. Melting snow and ice could push climates everywhere past a tipping point. As the earth warms, melting snow and ice expose dark surfaces such as land and oceans, and the switch from heat-reflecting to heat-absorbing surfaces could turbo-charge further warming.

"Burning gas or oil in engines and furnaces has pushed carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere far above where they've been for hundreds or thousands of years, and the debate has ended over whether these emissions are making the planet hotter. The Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change, a group of more than 1,500 scientists from 60 countries, asserts that some portion of the recent warming is the result of human activities." Linden thus verifies man's role as a polluter.

MAN'S FAILING EFFORTS

There are numerous other evidences of our defiled and polluted earth than those which have been briefly considered, and it is apparent that man's careless and selfish tendencies are contributing factors to the present levels of pollution affecting our planet. Even those nations that produce the highest levels of pollutants are ill-prepared to act swiftly and seriously because of economic reasons, and the situation continues to worsen.

Whether it be in the form of plastic products, the burning of fossil fuels to run our cars and trucks, or modern technology which includes refrigeration

and other equipment, man seems unable to control his own environment and the level of polluting emissions and by-products that are destroying it.

THE CURSED EARTH

Adam plunged mankind into sin and death because of his disobedience, and God cursed our earth as a consequence. "Unto Adam he [God] said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."—Gen. 3:17-19

THE RESTORED EARTH

Our all-wise and loving Heavenly Father, however, has included plans for the cleansing of the earth, as well as its inhabitants, under the administration of Christ's coming kingdom. The Prophet Ezekiel assures us of this fact when he wrote, "Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by."—Ezek. 36:33,34

Although the prophet was directing his words to the rebellious "house of Israel" (vs. 32), this prophecy nevertheless reveals God's ultimate plan for removing sin, and the death penalty that is now

over mankind. It also includes the cleansing of the earth from its present state of defilement and pollution.

Ezekiel elaborates further in his prophetic vision concerning the future restored earth. "They shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited." (vs. 35) Once God's curse is removed, the earth will once again become as it was during the time when our first parents, Adam and Eve, were in the Garden of Eden.

The earth itself will undergo tremendous changes as the cleaning-up process gets underway. There will be a transformation from its present state of defilement and pollution to one of wholesomeness and cleanliness. The worldwide rebuilding program will transform the waste lands from their present state, and the cities will be rebuilt.

EARTH YIELDS ITS INCREASE

The foretold provisions of God for a restored earth with its restored inhabitants is again described by the prophet in these wonderful words of promise. "The tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them."—Ezek. 34:27

A MARVELOUS PERSPECTIVE

The author of the six volumes of *Studies in the Scriptures* captures a marvelous perspective concerning the restored earth and its people during the

time of Christ's coming kingdom. He writes, [Volume I, pp. 191,192] "Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay—not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realize the resurrection work complete.—Rev. 21:4"

ALL THINGS MADE NEW

We are witnessing the signs and evidences of the ending of the present Gospel Age as foretold, and the nearness of Christ's kingdom that will soon bring peace and happiness to mankind as promised by our loving Heavenly Father. May we continue to faithfully and prayerfully look forward to Christ's kingdom of truth, peace, and righteousness.

The revelator writes in symbol of this most blessed time. "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw

the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. 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. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful."—Rev. 21:1-5■