

A THOUSAND YEARS OF PEACE

***“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace,
good will toward men.” - Luke 2:14***

This was the wonderful message the angel of the Lord announced to the shepherds of Bethlehem on the night of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ -- a message that has echoed through the centuries, to bring hope and comfort to all Gospel believers.

During the nineteen centuries of Gospel preaching, the message of *peace on earth*, which God has given men, has interested only a relatively few by comparison with the vast majority of people who have lived and died since the angels gave their wonderful message to the Shepherds on Judea's hillside. If one considers that during this Gospel Age, mankind has been painfully afflicted by wars and rumors of war, famines, pestilence and earthquakes in various places, it is logical to conclude that such a message awaits a future fulfillment.

Throughout the dark centuries of history, there has been a slow but irresistible advance in all fields of human endeavor. God has allowed man to progress in knowledge of the physical world, causing the crumbling of one after another of all the myths of the past.

If we consider the pathway traveled by man, we realize that it is really wonderful what has been accomplished. Scientific research that had been moving at a snail's pace for a long, long time has, during the last century and much more now, been swiftly making up for lost time. Unbelievable technical research in the electronic, chemical, biological, medical and other fields seem to have opened the floodgates, and prospects of wonderful developments, never dreamed of in the past, are being realized. Two modern conquests that have changed the world in the field of science are: 1) the splitting of the atom and the subsequent effect that it has had on the field of energy as well as the devastating effect when used in wars; 2) the conquest of space, even to the walking on the moon, as well as the effect that satellites have had on world communication.

But peace? Where is there peace on earth? Centuries of Gospel preaching not only have not converted the world, but in the general picture of scientific progress and technological development, we are forced to take note of a process that is *de-Christianizing* the masses. From the atheism of the past there follows today an even more dangerous and prevailing *attitude of indifference*. It is everywhere present. Even among the theologians of Christendom we can see a future where mankind, if things continue as they are, will come to a point where they will feel they have no need for any form of religion that would impose moral restrictions on them.

During this Gospel Age the whole world, and particularly the religious world, has been afflicted by bloody wars; one Christian nation raises sword against another Christian nation; other religious peoples slaughter brothers of different religions with vehemence and hatred.

Difficult Days Precede The Kingdom

If we try to define this century of great scientific and technological discoveries, we must include on the other hand the effects that they have had on society. We are now greatly poorer in areas such as

ethics, morality, and spirituality. Worldly psychiatry and psychology have had their detrimental effect on man's thinking. Corruption floods our society in government as well as in formerly respected positions held by doctors and lawyers. In these and other fields there are little or no scruples. Insurance companies are being fleeced at every turn. Society now has an insatiable thirst for material possessions which is nurtured by the greed of corporations who flood the media with their deceptive, enticing advertisements. Heinous crimes are increasing even among children, and there seems no end to the violent acts carried out by perpetrators towards their victims. Abortion and euthanasia are rampant. These are characteristic of any country or society that has lost sight of moral absolutes and universal values needed to give society direction and cohesion. Man, who was created in the image and likeness of God, has fallen to a deplorable state often abusing, rather than loving, their families and neighbors.

Pseudo-scientific fantasy and literature, sensational journalism with criminal background, an avalanche of books and magazines devoted to pornography, and explicit sex and psychology's self-centered teachings are suffocating all the pure and noble sentiments implanted by God in the human mind. Consciences have become insensitive, hardened and seared to what is right, noble, and pure.

Scientific and technological progress is like a two-edged sword which has caused immense destruction, especially in the wars fought in this century. The anger and greed of the nations, aided and inspired by the god of this world, Satan (2 Cor. 4:4), have brought about death, fear and indescribable horror to mankind. A prophecy in Habakkuk 2:12 give the nations warning: *"Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establishes a city by iniquity! Behold, is it not of the LORD of Hosts that the people labor to feed the fire, and nations weary themselves in vain?"* This message has great relevance to our day and should be a warning to all those who are bent on evil in order to gain for themselves prominence and power. There will yet be retribution exacted by the Lord for all the evil that has been done.

The Apostle Paul predicted that at the end of this age there would be perilous times. The days in which we live seem to describe well what he spoke of in 2 Tim. 3:2-5: *"For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power, from such people turn away!"* Is this not the mirror of our civilization and that which the Apostle, with inspired words, prophesied so many centuries ago?

All the great civilizations of the past collapsed because of moral decay and corruption. We see this happening before our eyes today on a world-wide scale. Yes, the rise in moral degradation, corruption, atheistic philosophies, the escalation of violence, and apathy, where people refuse to get involved, and the pollution of the earth is quickly bringing the collapse of our modern day civilization.

To most of the unbelieving world the future is dark and bleak. They have nothing in which to place their hope. Governments have been toppled in storms of civil unrest and world leaders are continuously scrambling to put out economic, social and cultural fires before they are consumed. The question is: Where will it all end? Man does not know nor does he wish to think about it. But God gives us the answer in His Word of prophecy. Before the final end of the age in which we are living, there will come a time of trouble called *the great tribulation* to bring the world of mankind to their knees before their Creator, when His voice will say, *"Be still...and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth"* (Psalms 46:10,11).

The Great Pre-Kingdom Tribulation

The Scriptures prophesy that there is ahead of us a “great time of trouble” which will occur before Jesus, as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, sets up his 1,000-year earthly kingdom. Daniel speaks of it as “a time of trouble such as never has been like it since the beginning of the world” (Daniel 12:1).

There is an exact historical reference as a *sign of the times* which permits us to clearly point to such a happening. It is the return of the Jewish people to Palestine; something that has not happened by chance but was predicted would happen at the end of the Gospel age. See Ezek. 36, 37.

We can positively affirm, in the light of modern events, that the attention of the whole world is focused on Palestine, in the ancient land of Canaan. Rich in history, cradle of civilization, stage of memorable events, after being almost 2,000 years in the shadow, it has become the center of world attention. Who can lightly affirm that once the first prophetic sign is dramatically fulfilled, the others will not also be fulfilled? What will follow the fulfillment of this sign?

The Revelation affirms that this last battle of history before the Kingdom will be fought in a place called, in Hebrew, “Arma-geddon.” Armageddon is identified as the actual Plain of Esdraelon, or Valley of Jezereel which extends to the north from Mt. Carmel to the Sea of Galilee, and in the south to Mt. Gilboa. Here were fought the most celebrated battles in history.

The gathering of the nations in the “Valley of Jehoshaphat” for the judgment of the nations follows the restoration of Israel. This gathering is shown figuratively in Joel 3:12,13: *“Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in **the sickle**, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for **the press is full**, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great.”*

The “Valley of Jehoshaphat” and “Armageddon” will probably be the centers of a vast conflagration which will envelop the whole world. The nations will gather in the “Valley of Jehoshaphat” while at Armageddon there will be standing in battle formation, beside the kings (armies) of the whole world, also those who will come from the East. See Joel 2:20; Ezek. 38:1-6; Rev. 16:12.

The prophet, in Zephaniah 3:8, 9, also tells of this time of trouble; but note what follows it. *“Therefore wait for Me, says the LORD, for the day when I arise as a witness. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my wrath and all the heat of my anger; for in the fire of my passion all the earth shall be consumed with the fire of My jealousy. **For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one accord.**”* God’s wrath will purify the nations! The Apostle Peter, in 2 Peter 3: 7, 10-13, gives us the same sequence of events. *“But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But **the day of the Lord** will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? **Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.**”*

The Apostle Paul tells us also of this trouble and the Kingdom to follow in Hebrews 12:26-29: *“Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the*

earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire."

We read in 2 Corinthians 4:4 that Satan has exerted a strangle- hold on mankind and that he has brainwashed them with error: *"In whom **the god of this world** hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."* In Ephesians 2:2 he is referred to as *"the prince of the power of the air."* In John 12:31 Jesus speaks of Satan as the *"prince of this world."* In reference to the church, Paul says in Ephesians 6:12, *"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."*

Before the Lord can establish his Kingdom, Satan must be taken off the scene. His evil influence must be done away with so that he will not continue to deceive men. We find that this will happen, for it says in Revelation 20:1, 2, *"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And **he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years."***

In addition to Satan being eliminated from the earthly scene, the trouble that is to come upon this world will have a turning up or plowing over of all things, so that mankind will be ready to receive the planting of the seeds of righteousness in their hearts.

"Thy Kingdom Come"

Christians have been praying for the Lord's Kingdom to come and for His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven ever since Jesus suggested these words to his disciples in answer to their request of how to pray. The early disciples and many Christian down through the ages prayed these words, expecting this Kingdom to be imminent and even to come in their day.

The fact that Jesus said we should pray for it leaves absolutely no doubt that one day the will of God *will be done* on this earth in which we live. This certainly has not happened yet and so we continue to lift up such petitions to our Father in heaven that one day soon His Kingdom will be established here. Then the peace men have sought in vain without the *"Prince of Peace"* will finally become a reality. Note carefully the words of the prophets Isaiah and Micah when they describe this glorious kingdom to come upon the earth. Isaiah 2:2-4: *"And it shall come to pass **in the last days** that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, 'Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.' And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."* This same theme is spoken of by the prophet in Micah 4:1-3: *"But 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: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.' And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into*

pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Their words are practically identical. They tell of a time that we have never yet experienced but will of a surety yet come.

Restitution of All Lost By Father Adam

The Bible tells us that the earth will be restored to its original per-fection when the Lord returns to set up his Kingdom. 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.*" Isaiah 35:1, 2 tells us, "*The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God.*"

Yes, God has promised a new arrangement of things which will one day prevail upon the earth. Isaiah speaks again of this time in Isa. 65:17-25: "*For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; the voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying. No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days... They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of my people, and my elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble; for they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, says the LORD*" (NKJV).

The Apostle John records this coming event in Revelation 21:1-7: "*And 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. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."* The Apostle Peter also speaks of this new heavens and new earth in 2 Peter 3:13: "*Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.*"

God's judgment will continue throughout the whole period of this Kingdom in which Jesus and his Bride will reign. Revelation 2:26-27 tells us of this: "*And he that overcomes, and keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.*"

Then in 1 Corinthians 6:2 we read: *“Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?”*

Isaiah tells us in Isaiah 26:9: *“With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for **when thy judgments** are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.”*

The inhabitants of this world have not yet had the opportunity to learn righteousness because the judgments spoken of by the prophet are to occur during the Lord’s coming 1,000-year Kingdom on this earth. During their life in “this present evil world,” they have, however, seen the results of sin and disobedience. The time of kingdom judgment will also be a time of learning righteousness rather than evil. Sin will be seen for what it is and for what it has done to man and his environment, and it will no longer be tolerated under the Reign of Christ. Peace will prevail because the *“Prince of Peace,”* Jesus Christ, will be on His throne (Isa. 9:6).

The question might be asked: Who will be living on the earth during this time of judgment and learning of righteousness? Jesus, we are told, died as a *“ransom for **all** to be testified in due time”* (1 Tim. 2:6). He was the sin offering that provided atonement for the sins of the people (Rom. 8:3). The penalty for sin was death which was pronounced on Adam and has been carried out ever since those times upon all mankind, for all are sinners. Romans 3:23 verifies this: *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* Since Jesus paid the price or ransom for sin, he has redeemed **all men from the penalty of death**. This being so, we see the need for the resurrection of all those who died under that death sentence. The resurrection of the dead is a very important doctrine in the Scriptures. So important, in fact that the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:13-14, *“But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.”* In Ezek. 16:55 we are told that even the wicked city of Sodom, which had long been destroyed, would *“return to her own borders,”* and that it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for some of the cities where Jesus lived and preached. Mt. 10:12

Two Resurrections

Jesus said in John 5:28-29, *“Marvel not at this (the raising of Lazarus), for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the tombs 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 judgment”* (ASV).

Who are those raised to a *“resurrection of life?”* These are those who have been justified by faith and have become Jesus’ overcoming disciples in the Gospel Age and who will have part in the *“first resurrection”* spoken of in Revelation 20:6: *“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.**”* These will be the Bride of Christ (Rev. 21:9) and are the *“saints”* mentioned in 1 Cor. 6:2. Their judgment day is now, in this Gospel Age.

Who are those that will be raised to a *“resurrection of judgment?”* These are *all* the remainder of mankind who will ever receive life on this earth from the beginning of time up to the day of that resurrection. The judgment that is referred to is a time when the opportunity will be given all resurrected mankind to learn the ways of righteousness (Isaiah 26:9), contrary to the teaching of many who believe that this judgment is to be one of eternal torment and damnation. Since *“God Is love”* (1 John 4:7), this could never be His plan for the redemption of man from sin and death. His love, grace, mercy, and compassion will have all men to have the opportunity to find salvation in Jesus Christ. All

men have not had this opportunity. In fact, prior to the coming of Jesus at his first advent, billions had lived and died who could have absolutely no way of hearing the only Name whereby man can be saved...that of Jesus Christ.

It is for the reader to decide whether they will choose to answer the invitation of Jesus to become his faithful disciple and be partakers of *"the heavenly calling in Christ Jesus"* while there is still time and before God shuts the door to this wonderful never-to-be-repeated opportunity. Accepting Jesus now, as your personal Savior and Sovereign Lord, walking in the narrow way by committing your will to doing only the Lord's Will, by His Grace and through His Spirit, will bring peace and joy now, and *"an inheritance incorruptible that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you"* if you are faithful unto death. See 1 Peter 1:4; Rev. 2:10. Enter in!

The World is Waiting for the Sunrise

Mankind has always aspired to, hoped for and dreamed of a Utopia, which would bring in an era of peace, liberty, life and happiness. But it is only through Old Testament Messianic prophecies that man is furnished with the grandest hope of all ages by way of the announcement of a coming age of world peace and justice, with the promise of physical and moral perfection on a restored earth.

The Kingdom of Christ will indeed be a Kingdom of peace, justice and love, but it will also be an inflexible Kingdom of righteousness, for it is written that the nations will be *"ruled with a rod of iron,"* for Christ will first be *"King of righteousness and then King of peace."* Those of mankind who will be resurrected to the earth will perfectly recollect their former earthly existence as an everlasting lesson of the shame and sorrow that evil and sin produced. The further one moves away from God now, following the way of sin and Satan, the further he will have to move back to God in sorrow, repentance and purification. The Messianic Kingdom will be placed by God under the Sovereign rulership of Christ and His elect Church.

1. The day of resurrection - John 6:40
2. The day of judgment - Matt. 6:34; Isa. 26:9
3. The day of Christ, or of the Lord of *"my day"* - 1 Cor. 3:13; Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:2; John 8:56.
4. The day God judges the secrets of men by Jesus Christ - Romans 2:16.
5. The day Christ will judge the world in Righteousness - Acts 17:31

This Judgment day will be one of trial and learning as the world walks up the *"highway of holiness"* of Isaiah 35:8-10: *"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. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon...but the redeemed shall walk there: 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."*

At the end of the 1,000-year Kingdom, mankind will be tested one final time when Satan shall be loosed. Those that choose righteousness will live forever on earth. Those who fail this final test will have their place with Satan and his angels in *"the lake of fire and brimstone which is the second death"* (Rev. 21:8).

Then all man's enemies, which at present do such great harm and destruction, will be defeated and uprooted forever; the last enemy that will be destroyed will be death itself. When this great world-wide work is completed, then our Lord Jesus Christ will hand back the scepter to the Father so that *"God may be all and in all"* (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

This then, dear reader, is the wonderful prospect that God, in His infinite grace and mercy, opens before you. May it give you a real hope and in true gratitude and humility of heart spur you on to the desire to please God and exalt the Name of His Beloved Son, Jesus, in your life. Choose today to build your life on the only foundation there is, Jesus Christ. In Him, for Him, and for the sake of Him, all these things become a wonderful dazzling reality. Accept Him as your Savior. Choose to follow Him as a faithful disciple. By so doing, you shall find true joy and you will realize the highest possible purpose for your life.

Thy Kingdom Come

Thy Kingdom come! Give ear, O King of ages!
This earnest prayer is knocking at Thy door;
The Church of God with one accord engages
In hopeful pleading till this night is o'er.

Thy Kingdom come! We wait the promised glory
That, like the sea, embraces every shore,
We wait the time proclaimed in Psalm and story,
When strife shall cease and nations war no more.

Thy Kingdom come! Oh, bring its feast of gladness
To groaning creatures wasted by despair;
To dry all faces with the breath of gladness,
And soothe our sorrows with Thy love and care.

Thy Kingdom come! To darkened minds revealing
The blissful springs of gratitude and praise.
Come, Sun of righteousness, with beams of healing;
Dispense Thy light in Universal rays.

G. M. Rills

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLING MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL
32 Chapel Lane, Somersworth, NH 03878