

A THOUSAND YEARS OF PEACE GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY!

The great desire of all people in the world today is to be able to live in peace with their neighbors, but the greed, envy, hatred and aggressive behavior of some, especially of those in power, have kept the world in turmoil since Cain murdered his brother Abel (Gen. 4:8).

In the beginning, wars were fought between members of the same family. These then escalated to wars between tribes, cities, and countries. The history of the world is a history of war, revolution and blood-shed; of conquest, death and destruction. Its leaders, such as Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Genghis Khan, and Napoleon have been called great leaders, while the poor lads fighting and dying are all but forgotten.

World War 1 was "the war to end all wars." Millions perished, and still there is no peace on earth. The League of Nations was powerless. With the rise of Communism and Fascism, succeeded by Nazism, wars have been fought for conquest and political control of nations. This ultimately led to the explosion of World War 2, in which more millions perished, with great destruction wrought in Germany, Italy, France, Japan, China, and England.

Since that war ended and despite all the efforts of the United Nations, wars continued to break out in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Central America. This is the situation today in the world, and when we speak of 1000 years of peace soon to come, people shake their heads in disbelief or smile, and say it will never come.

Nevertheless, the Bible declares *that "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning"* (Psalm 30:8); and the angel, on the night our Lord was born, told the shepherds, *"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people ... Peace on earth and good will among men"* (Luke 2:8-14).

The question we ask is: Has there been peace on earth since the time the angels made their declaration? The answer, of course, is 'no'! What has happened? With the fall of the Roman Empire, Europe, North Africa and the Middle East were plunged into what we call *THE DARK AGES*, where ignorance and superstition reigned supreme. Emerging from the Dark Ages through the invention of the printing press, and with dissemination of know-ledge readily available, men began to build a modern civilization.

Nearly 200 years ago, the epoch of invention and scientific discovery emerged, bringing with it a great increase in knowledge. Travel became common over the entire earth; people intermingled and communicated with one another as never before; and with a vast expansion of commerce the nations became interdependent. They all needed to sell their products and buy from one another what was needed.

So we ask more questions. Will the angel's promise of "peace on earth and good will among men" ever be fulfilled, and if so, how long must man-kind wait for this wonderful and blessed fulfillment? How will universal and permanent peace come about?

The only source upon which we can confidently rely to answer these questions is the infallible Word of God, a great part of which consists of prophecies. Bible prophecy is the future written long in advance under the direction of God's Holy Spirit. It will be fulfilled in every detail when its due time comes. The rise of nations and great events of the past were foretold by Scriptural prophecies which also predict future events and conditions on earth, using types, symbols and illustrations to describe its prophecies.

For example, the Bible predicts two great calamities to come on the face of the earth. The first is called: "*The Great Tribulation*," and the second: "*The Great Day of Wrath*." They engulf the world and destroy the present civilization in order to prepare it for God's Kingdom on earth (Dan. 2:35, 44; 7:13, 27; 12:1; Mat.24:21; Rev.11:15-18).

This destruction includes both *the Earth* and *Heavens* (Haggai 2:6, 7; Hebrews 12:26; Isaiah 24:1-13,17-23; 34:1-4; Revelation 6:12-17). This means the destruction of the present social and political order, symbolically called *the Earth*, and false religious systems instituted and ruled by Satan, symbolically called *the Heavens*, which are to be consumed by fire (2 Peter 3:7).

Satan is the creator of both political and religious false systems in the world. He is the author of lies and the instigator of all wickedness, cruelty, wars and suffering. The Bible calls him "*the god of this evil world*" (Gal. 1:4; 2 Cor. 4:4; Matt. 4:8, 9; John 8:44; 14:30), He is allowed by God's permissive will to rule for a time with good reason.

When the Bible states that this world is to end, it does not mean the earth is to be destroyed. The planet was made to be inhabited and will exist forever (Eccl. 1:4; Isa. 45:18). When this order of things with its war, poverty, injustice, sinfulness, sickness and death passes away, Satan and his demons will be imprisoned in a bottomless pit, unable to influence the nations or tempt the people to wrong-doing. Fallen angels will come under the judgment of Christ and the Church (Rev. 20:1-3; 1 Cor. 6:3).

In place of the nations and institutions that will be destroyed in the Day of the Wrath of God Almighty, the Lord Jesus and His Bride (the Church) will set up a new government of peace and justice for all, to last one thousand years. Then will be the answer to that which our Lord told us to pray, "*Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*" (Matt. 6:10).

This Kingdom will consist of two phases, one heavenly or spiritual and the other earthly. It is often pictured in the Bible as Zion (spiritual) and Jerusalem (earthly), as in Isaiah 2:3.

Christ and His Bride will rule the earth for 1000 years until all evil is forever destroyed, and the curse of sin and death is completely removed (2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21:1-7; Isa 25:6-9; 35:1-10). Satan and his demons will be displaced by Christ and His elect Church, who will rule the world together.

Under the Righteous rule of Jesus Christ and His Church, a *New Heaven* will replace the old spiritual control. This will mean a new worldwide system of true religion. The blessings of God's Word will be taught to all the people and established throughout the earth. Praise God, for "*He will have all men to be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of the truth*," when all will know that Christ died "*a ransom for all*" (1 Timothy 2:3-6).

A "*New Earth*" will also be established; that is, there will be a new order of society upon the entire globe. This is in accordance with the Master's promise, "*Behold, I make all things new ... the former*

things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4, 5). What will this new earth and its population be like? We will let the Bible answer this question!

In that wonderful new order (world) about to be set up, there'll be no war, strife or violence. Righteousness, justice and truth will flourish. Error and every evil custom or practice will be put down. In that 1,000-year Kingdom, the earth will abundantly yield its fruitage, and there will be no hunger or poverty. Everyone on earth will have an inalienable home. As it is written, *"They shall build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. They shall ... long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain"* (Isa. 65:17-25).

Not only will all people receive a complete education, but also a full understanding of God's plan and purposes. *"The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the seas"* (Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14). *"For then I will turn to the people a pure language that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve Him with one consent"* (Zeph. 3:9). There will be but one religion worldwide, the truth of God's Word. It will be so plain that the wayfaring man need not make a mistake concerning what is the will and the way of the Lord. (See Isa. 35:8-10.)

Along with the regeneration and perfection of minds and morals of mankind, the physical bodies of men, women and children will be made whole. None will be blind, deaf, mute, lame or deformed - disease will disappear (Isa. 35:1-7). The infant, the child and the youth will grow to maturity and never become old. The aged will become younger until they regain the prime of life, which they will retain without a fear of decline or becoming old again. (Job 33:25).

As a result of the Lord's power, mankind will be restored to its original condition, all speaking the same language. The earth itself will be changed into a worldwide paradise. Instead of toiling and spending billions of dollars to produce destructive weapons of war, men will be happy to use their strength and time building houses, roads, and public works for the benefit of all people. Men will never learn war anymore; there will be no more armies, navies or air forces (Isa. 2:2-4).

But what about the billions who have died since Abel? Have they perished beyond hope of recovery? Will they live again? Will relatives, friends, and neighbors be reunited? If so, when and where? The Bible offers a most blessed hope to all mankind. It tells us how God sent His Only Begotten Son, Jesus, to be man's Redeemer by being transferred into Mary's womb and born as a human babe; how, when mature, Jesus gave His life as the ransom for every human being who has ever lived by dying on the Cross for the sin of the world (1 Timothy 2:5, 6; Hebrews 2:9).

God's oath-bound promise guarantees every man, woman and child of every race and nationality a resurrection from the dead. Their new bodies will possess the same personality and memory they had in their former life. Yes, *"All who are in their graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth"* (John 5:28, 29). It will take place right here on this earth. *"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell (the grave) delivered up the dead which were in them ..."* (Rev. 20:13). The 1000 years of peace will also be the 1000 years of resurrection, reunion, reformation and regeneration for the sin-blighted human family. The Prophetic Word gives plain evidence that these blessings will begin soon after our Lord's return.

The Golden or Millennial Age, which is about to break in full splendor, is called *"Times of restitution (restoration) of all things which God has spoken by the mouths of all His holy prophets since the world*

began ..." (Acts 3:19-24). It will be ushered in by the greatest tribulation ever known, followed by the Day of Wrath that will destroy civilization by purifying the earth for the Kingdom of righteousness. However, the travail will be of short duration, and a thousand years of peace will bring righteousness, prosperity, health, life and true joy to all mankind forever. Only the willfully incorrigible and wicked will suffer the punishment of eternal death which the Bible calls the *second death*. Then, *"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). Such will be the ONE THOUSAND YEARS OF PEACE! Praise the Lord!

May we continue to earnestly pray, ***"Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven!"***

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