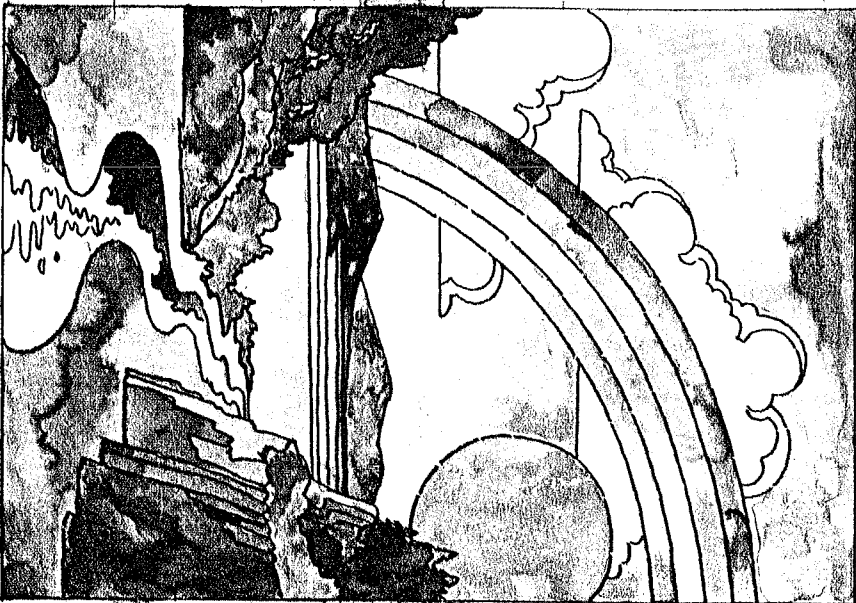


# COMING A NEW AGE!



# COMING A NEW AGE!

by Brian Knowles

*If there's anything the world needs now, it's hope. Hope for the future—hope for a time of peace, prosperity and general spiritual enlightenment. But such hope escapes us in this world of war, crime, famine, environmental crisis, moral profligacy and political upheaval. Something is terribly wrong with this world. The future of man looks bleak indeed if man is to control his own future! Fortunately, there's good news ahead. The Bible speaks of two ages—"this present evil world" and "the world tomorrow." Tomorrow's world will not be governed by carnal man. Nor will it be influenced by that evil spiritual entity whom the Bible calls "the prince of the power of the air"—Satan the devil. Instead it will be a completely new world, a totally different age, during which the government of God will reign supreme. Peace will break out everywhere, and all mankind—not just an isolated few—will begin to walk down that glorious road toward the fulfillment of their ultimate, magnificent destiny! A marvelous new age is coming—fortunately for all of us!*

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# THIS PRESENT EVIL AGE

Today's world is clearly imperfect. It is often a bizarre mixture of good and evil, with the latter tending to predominate. In spite of man's best intentions, his humanistic idealism, and his incredible creative genius, things still tend to go wrong.

## Wars and Rumors of Wars

Wars continue to scar the landscape and rumors of wars to shatter tranquility in the realm of man. From the time the United States entered the Second World War, for example, until 1973, there were only three calendar years during which that country was not involved in armed conflict—1956, 1957 and 1959. That's only three years in three decades!

Since the peace of 1945 there has been an armed conflict somewhere in this world, on the average, every five months. In the first three decades of the twentieth century, Europe fought 74 wars—more than in the previous 800 years!

In the nearly eight decades since the beginning of this century some *100 million* people have died at the hands of their fellowmen! That includes deaths in wars, concentration camps and even by means of high explosives. What an incredible legacy of violence and suffering! Psychiatrist Anthony Storr was quoted in a British newspaper as saying of man, "We are the cruelest and most ruthless species that has ever walked the earth."

To many individuals hungry for power, human life is

cheap. It has been suggested that as many as 700,000 people died in China's internal struggles and that in the Indonesian difficulties some 500,000 lost their lives. The Nigerian civil war claimed a quarter of a million lives and in Vietnam's prolonged agony some 650,000 North Vietnamese gave their lives along with 110,000 South Vietnamese. All were cannon fodder in the debilitating power struggles of the few at the top. Wherever man has walked he has left a trail sodden with his own blood. Violence lies deep in the heart of man. As Isaiah said, "... Deeds of violence are in their hands. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood... desolation and destruction are in their highways" (Isa. 59:6-7, RSV).

Mankind simply does not know the way to peace or, if he does, he doesn't have the will to bring it about. Isaiah concluded, "The way of peace they know not..." (verse 8). The apostle Paul later quoted these verses to describe the general state of man before God (Rom. 3:12-17). Man is a warmaker. Man, separated from God, is incapable of bringing about peace in the human community. His humanistic solutions simply haven't worked.

## Man Has Rejected God

Because man has not generally been willing to include God and God's will in his thinking, he has been allowed to go his own way. Paul, quoting the Old Testament, said, "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18; Psalm 36:1).

And what happens when man rejects God? Paul again answers, "And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct" (Rom. 1:28). "Improper conduct"! A thunderous understatement! Man has gone far beyond the merely "improper"—he has descended into an abyss of moral evil that staggers the imagination! As Paul wrote, "... They became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened... Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves" (Rom. 1:21, 24). Paul then goes on to describe immoral acts of man separated from the mind of God: male homosexuality, lesbianism, etc. (verses 26-27). He says, "They were filled with *all manner of wickedness*, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful,

inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless" (Rom. 1:29-31).

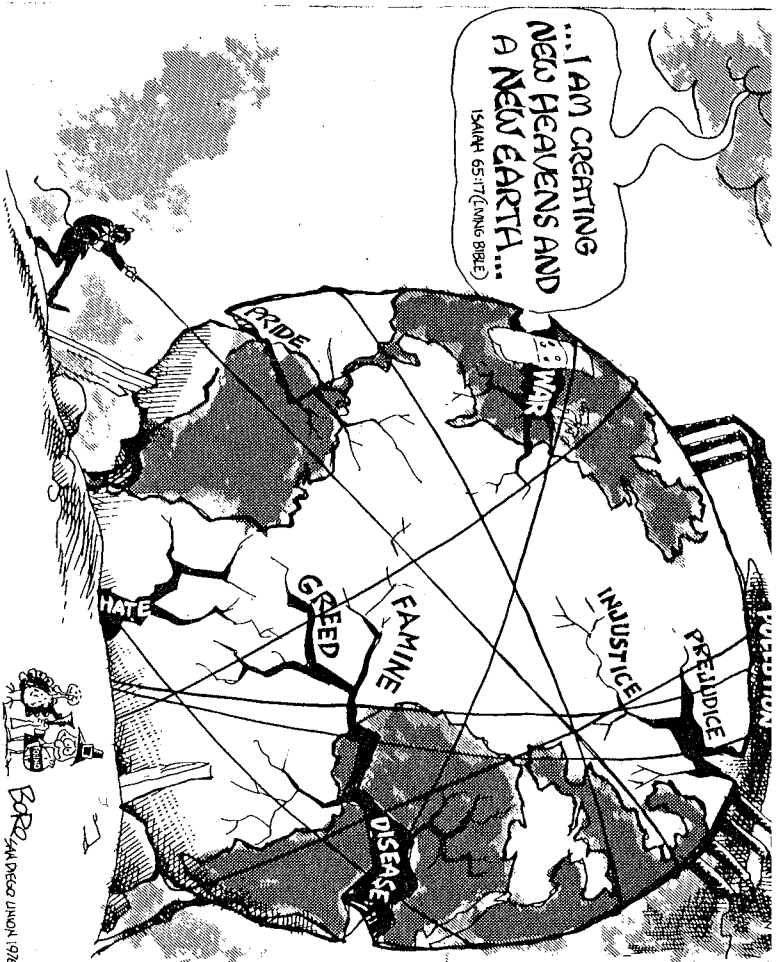
What an incredible description of a society gone morally mad. How like *our* world! As one writer put it, "The faint high whine of madness is in the air." Man, cut off from God, descends into every imaginable kind of immorality and sin. Yet, man still has a conscience. He still senses the magnitude of his own evil. Man finds the conflict between his deeds and the dictates of his conscience impossible to live with. So he *rationalizes* his sins. He justifies them and explains them away. Man turns to his own mental resources, ignores God and revelation, and proceeds humanistically. Once he does so, he feels that he is now "wise." Through philosophy he attempts to explain his relationship to reality. But Paul warns, "Claiming to be wise, they became fools..." (Rom. 1:22). "For although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless *minds were darkened*" (Rom. 1:21). Spiritually speaking, when man shuts God out, the light of truth also flickers out. And when that happens man descends into spiritual and moral darkness. The fruits of his condition are everywhere apparent. Man, in his natural unspiritual state, performs what the Bible calls "the works of the flesh": "Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like" (Gal. 5:19-21).

What an accurate description of man's world! Paul's description is as valid today as it was in his day. Man's *nature* has not changed. Man continues to shut God out of his thinking—perhaps more so today than ever before. The whole panorama of human behavior demonstrates this beyond question.

### The Works of the Flesh

Immorality of every stripe dominates the Western world. Venereal disease is described as "pandemic." This, of course, is the result of rampant promiscuity. Divorce has been on the increase for years.

In the United States the number of marriages is leveling off while the divorce rate continues to climb. More children are being raised by a single parent and more women are heading families alone. Marriage is seen as a bad trip by increasing numbers of young people. According to the U.S.



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*News and World Report* (February 28, 1977), since 1970 there has been a 102 percent increase in the number of unmarried couples living together in the United States. The figure has risen from 327,000 to 660,000 in seven years. The latest figures on illegitimate births indicate a 14.3 percent rise.

Such family instability is not limited to the United States either. In 1974 West Germany reported a 9.3 percent increase in divorces over the previous year. The Statistics Office in Wiesbaden reported that the graph of divorces is climbing sharply.

Dutch divorces also doubled in four years, according to an Associated Press report of September 12, 1975. Social workers in the Netherlands claim that economic problems are one of the chief causes for divorce in that country.

### Sexual Immorality

Britain too is not without its moral problems. According to Peter Elers, vicar of the Church of England in Thaxted, Essex, one in every six priests in the Church of England is "homosexual by nature." Elers himself is a self-confessed homosexual and is head of the Gay Christian Movement (*Sunday Telegraph*, June 27, 1976).

Homosexuals are coming out of the closet in militant droves throughout the United States and Britain. Homosexual "Christian" churches are springing up here and there as gays assert themselves and seek acceptability in society.

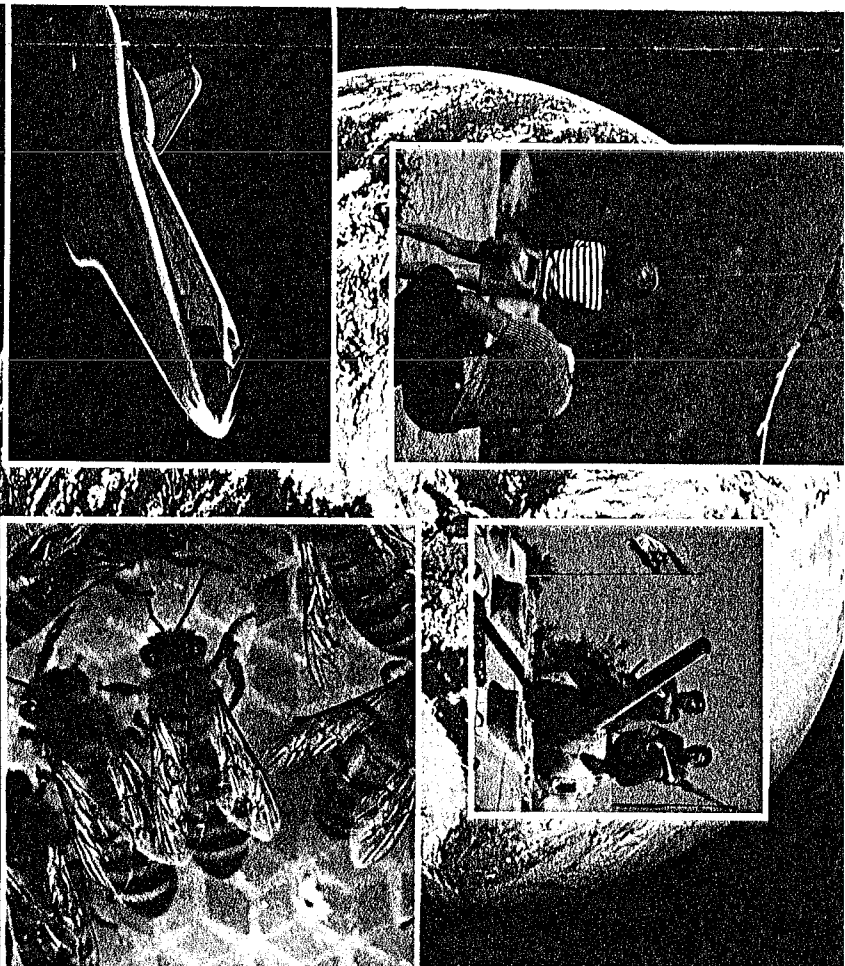
The climate of increasing immoral sexual activity is capitalized upon by the pornbrokers. Incest and pedophilia, homosexuality, and every imaginable type of heterosexual activity provide inexhaustible fuel for the fires of pornography throughout the West. *Time* magazine featured an article on the subject entitled "A Child's Garden of Perversity." The article alluded to unspeakable acts of perversity, involving children, being shown on film and in magazines catering to those who revel in such twisted material. Describing a pornographic film, the article said, "In another film members of a bike gang break into a church during a First Communion service and rape six little girls." The article went on to say, "These and a host of other equally shocking products are becoming increasingly common fare at porn shops and sex-oriented mail order houses across the nation. They are part of the newest growth area pushed by the booming, billion-dollar pornography industry: child porn" (*Time* magazine, April 4, 1977).

One wonders if there is anything left to do wrong in a world where values are so utterly twisted! How accurately Paul described mankind separated from the influence of the Holy Spirit and divorced from the mind of God: "... God gave them over to a *reprobate* mind..." (Rom. 1:28, KJV).

A reprobate mind is a mind devoid of sound moral judgment. It is a mind that has no standard of values except the expediency of the moment. Such a mind negates the influence of divine revelation in favor of strictly humanistic thinking. Man begins with himself and ends in oblivion.

Man apart from God is hopelessly lost. He is subject to "every wind of doctrine" (cf. Eph. 4:14), to every new idea or teaching that comes along. And worst of all he is subject to the influence of that great evil spirit known as Satan the devil, who has successfully "deceived the whole world" (Rev. 12:9).

Those who are separated from God, knowingly or otherwise, are linked to the mind of Satan the devil. Those who have elected to live independent of God are spiritually dead according to the Bible. Speaking to the Church of his day, Paul wrote, "And you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked,



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following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, *the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience*" (Eph. 2:1-2).

This age is not God's time! Satan the devil is "the god of this world" (II Cor. 4:4). His influence is everywhere present. He has blinded the minds of mankind to the truth of the Christian gospel (same verse). The message of God appears as mere "foolishness" to a spiritually darkened mankind. Paul told the Corinthians, "For the word of the cross is *folly* to those who are perishing..." (I Cor. 1:18).

The world, separated from God, is "perishing" in its sins. It is headed for oblivion. God will bring every work into judgment and those who have not accepted Christ will ultimately perish. (This will be explained more fully later in this booklet.)

Satan is this world's "death angel." He is behind "the System." The way that seems right to man, humanistically speaking, is really Satan's way—the way that ends in certain death. Those who rely exclusively on the powers of human reason, unguided by God, will ultimately be let down. Man, of himself, does not have the capacity to "order his footsteps aright." Jeremiah put it this way: "I know, O Lord, that *the way of man is not in himself*, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). Here is a clear anthropomast statement: Man does not have within himself the capacity for right self-direction. Man *needs* God.

Left to himself—and to the devil—man would most likely destroy himself. Nobel-prize-winning scientist Linus Pauling said in 1976: "I am afraid that within 25 or 50 years there will occur the greatest catastrophe in the history of the world. It might well result from a world war which could destroy civilization and might well be the end of the human race..." (from a UPI release, April 4, 1976).

Man, left to himself, could do that. Fortunately for the human race God has not left man to himself. He will intervene. This "present evil world" (Gal. 1:4) will pass away. This age of evil will come to a tumultuous end. God will bring it about because God exists and He is actively involved in the development of the human race. God has a great purpose. Man was created for a reason, and God will mercifully bring his purpose to fruition.

Those who are identified with God now, in this age, can know what is going to happen. "We know that we are of God,

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according to the Bible. Speaking to the Church of his day, Paul wrote, "And you he made alive, when *you were dead* through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked,

and *the whole world is in the power of the evil one*" (I John 5:19). We believe that statement by the apostle John is as accurate today as it was in the last decade of the first century. This world is evil. It is Satan's world. It is man's world.

But a new age is coming! In its final manifestation it will bring about universal righteousness and peace. Man will have been reconciled to his true God and Satan will have been banished to oblivion forever. The people of God believe the promise of God with regard to this new age: "But according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (II Peter 3:13).

In the next chapter you will read about just how God will bring about the transition from this present evil age to the new, glorious age of His rule.

## THE TRANSITION

This "present evil age" is doomed to pass into history. A new age will dawn. The beginning of that new age will be signaled by two major events, both of which were prophesied long ago in the Bible. The first of these is the return of Jesus Christ to this earth.

The literal return of Jesus Christ to this earth is the watershed event that will signal the commencement of the new age. In theological terms this event is called the *Parousia*. This term is from the Greek and it means "coming" or "advent." In the New Testament the return of Christ and the dawning of the new age are synonymous. On the occasion of the giving of the famous Olivet prophecy, for example, the disciples asked Jesus, "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of *your coming [parousia]* and of the *close of the age?*" (Matt. 24:3.) Notice that these events coincide.

The new age will be brought about by the return of Christ. It is only through His presence that the new order can become a reality. It will take His power, His wisdom, His authority from God the Father to make the difference.

The hope of the Parousia was the adrenaline that energized the New Testament Church. Though Christ had confirmed prior to His ordeal by crucifixion that He would "come again" (I John 14:3), it was necessary to reaffirm this hope in the minds of the disciples. Later, after the resurrection, an angel appeared to the apostles and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who



was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). As Christ was lifted up into the clouds so He will return in clouds.

So the Church waited for their Savior's return. The people of Paul's day "turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven..." (I Thess. 1:9, 10).

But Jesus never came in their generation. They all died not having received the promise of the Parousia. Man's age did not end in the first century. The dead in Christ went to "sleep" to await a future resurrection. Many generations would pass before that blessed event would occur. Tens of thousands of Christians would live and die in the centuries between Jesus' first coming and his second advent (Heb. 11:39-40).

Jesus will come again! Of that you can be certain. But when He comes is in the Father's hands (Matt. 24:36). Paul described the return of Christ in vivid language in I Thessalonians 4:16: "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God."

When Jesus comes He will be met by stiff opposition from the kingdoms of this world. But God will laugh at all such opposition and Christ will strike them down with "the rod of his mouth." David appears to have spoken prophetically of this human resistance to the Parousia in Psalm 2: "Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and his anointed, saying, 'Let us burst their bonds asunder, and cast their cords from us.'" (Psalm 2:1-3).

Man will not want to be ruled by the Kingdom of God. He will attempt to throw off the "shackles" of divine rule at the very outset. But "He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, 'I have set my king [Jesus] on Zion, my holy hill'" (verses 4-6).

Jesus' feet will stand on the Mount of Olives which is just to the east of the Temple mount in Jerusalem (Zech. 14:4). Around Him will be gathered a mighty host of angels along with tens of thousands of saints (resurrected Christians). He will then set His hand to smash the opposition with supernatural power. "You shall break them with a rod of iron, and

dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psalm 2:9).

Zechariah describes Jesus' triumphant, complete subjection of His enemies: "Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. . . . And this shall be the plague with which the Lord will smite all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh shall rot while they are still on their feet, their eyes shall rot in their sockets, and their tongues shall rot in their mouths" (Zech. 14:3, 12).

Woe to those who oppose the King of kings when He returns to take up the reins of government! Woe to those who do not welcome the Son of God!

As we have already seen, Jesus will not return in a "solo flight." With Him will come a mighty army of angels. Matthew tells us: "For the Son of man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father..." (Matt. 16:27).

In addition to the angels Jesus will be accompanied by "the saints"—those human beings who have been begotten into the family of God (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5, etc.). This leads us to a discussion of the second major event that will signal the beginning of the new age—the resurrection of the saints.

In Paul's description of the Parousia (quoted earlier) we find: "And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:16-17).

This is the first resurrection and it occurs in conjunction with the return of Christ. It is the second major signal that the new age is about to get under way.

Jesus Himself connected the resurrection to eternal life with the dawning of the new age in one of His answers to the Sadducees: "And Jesus said to them, 'The sons of *this age* marry and are given in marriage; but those who are accounted worthy to attain to *that age* and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die any more, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection'" (Luke 20:34-36).

Christians being made immortal, the resurrection, and the beginning of the new age are spoken of interchangeably. These two great events—the return of Christ (*parousia*) and the first general resurrection of the saints of God—comprise the transition which will usher in the new age and the rule of Christ on this earth!

# THE NEW AGE DAWNS

The hope of a new age of utopian peace and plenty has burned in the heart of man since earliest times. Somehow, man has never been satisfied with the world that he has made. Always he has yearned for a new golden age of peace, harmony and prosperity. Out of the wellspring of his own vivid imagination man has often devised utopian concepts—but always he has failed to bring them to reality. All attempts at humanly devised ideal societies have failed.

God's utopia will be founded in a land of "unwalled villages" (cf. Ezek. 38:11). It will be a free society in which man's creative imagination will be encouraged to soar to unprecedented heights. It will be utterly different from this world which is influenced by the insidiously evil mind of that old serpent, Satan the devil, who has deceived the entire world (Rev. 12:9). Satan's influence will be removed and the Spirit of God will flow out into human society, leading man gently in the right paths. One of the first major acts to be performed by the returning Messiah will be the binding of Satan. Jesus will use a powerful archangel, possibly Michael, to subdue man's angelic enemy: "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years" (Rev. 20:1-2). Satan is then thrown into the pit or "abyss" "that he should deceive the nations no more..." (verse 3).

But why should Satan be bound for a *thousand years*? Why not 500 or 2349? Because one thousand years is the duration of the first phase of the new age! The Latin for "thousand years" is *millennium*. Jesus Christ's return, which is accompanied by the first great resurrection, will usher in a millennial age of utopian peace and plenty! At the very outset Satan will be stopped, bound and imprisoned so that he can no longer influence the course of human events. During man's age Satan has been "the *god* of this world" (II Cor. 4:4). But Jesus Christ disqualified Satan from ruling over the earth (Matt. 4:1 ff.). The devil proved unworthy of that trust originally placed in him. He rebelled against the Creator from whom he derived his authority. Satan and his angelic minions will be reserved for judgment—later, after the millennium. "And the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6).

Following the thousand-year reign of Christ, Satan will be released briefly (Rev. 20:3). He will then demonstrate his moral incorrigibility by once again rebelling against Christ! "And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be loosed from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners [i.e., directions] of the earth, that is, Gog and Magog [symbolic of all nations], to gather them for battle..." (Rev. 20:7).

What incredible persistence! Even after Jesus Christ has presided over 1000 years of godly growth and development, even after a millennium of imprisonment, Satan will still not have learned his lesson! How *utterly* evil he will prove to be! "And they marched up over the broad earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city [Jerusalem]; but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were [cast], and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:9-10).

Tormented forever! That is Satan's fate! His final judgment will occur at the end of Christ's millennial rule. But that's another story. (If you do not already have it, be sure to write for our free booklet *Did God Create a Devil?* It explains the origin and destiny of Satan in great detail.) What is important to us at this juncture is the arrival of Christ's mil-

lennium of righteous rulership—the dawning of the new age.

Of course the binding of Satan is one of the chief things that makes a new age possible. So long as he is here to deceive and to destroy, things will continue as they have throughout six millennia of human history. But with Satan out of the picture the stage will be truly set for an utterly new order.

Jesus will establish Himself at Jerusalem, the “beloved city.” It will become His headquarters for a thousand years. “On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives which lies before Jerusalem on the east . . .” (Zech. 14:4).

Micah describes the establishment of Christ’s Kingdom in great detail: “It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain [symbol of a nation] of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, and many nations shall come, and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in his paths.’ *For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem*” (Micah 4:1-2).

Jerusalem will become the focal point of government for a truly “united nations.” The whole world will look to the Holy City for guidance. The glory of Jesus Christ who will reign as King of kings will shine forth from the City of Peace. “And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and *all flesh shall see it together*, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken” (Isa. 40:5). In the new age, as never before, Jesus Christ will be glorified among men. Before His benevolent but firm rulership “every knee shall bow.” But He will not rule with harshness and cruelty as do so many modern despots. He will practice what He preached to His own disciples about rulership: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority [*tyrannize*, Goodspeed translation] over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant . . . even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve . . .” (Matt. 20:25-28).

There will be no question about “who is in charge here” when Christ takes up world rulership. There will be power there to control the situation. Make no mistake about it. But that power will be used wisely. Jesus Christ will rule as mankind’s loving Servant. He will also serve God the Father and will work tirelessly to bring about universal peace and justice

## Change in Man's Nature Coming!

“I want,” wrote George B. Leonard, former *Look* magazine editor, “to dream of the kind of personal and communal transformation that may lead to the unification of the world, not by conquest or politics, but by the emergence of a new human nature . . . We have moved enough mountains, rechanneled enough rivers, leveled enough forests, gathered up enough gross physical energy. *There must be some larger destiny for humanity*” (*The Transformation*, p. 12).

Leonard’s wishes will be fulfilled—but not in the manner he expects. A new age will dawn and man’s nature will be changed. Man will begin to move in the direction of his “larger destiny.” Yet this change will come about not because human social evolution is taking place. It will happen because there is a transcendent Being called God who will bring it about. This God, in whose image man was created (Gen. 1:26-27), will set His hand to change the very nature of man.

Speaking prophetically of Israel, God says through Ezekiel: “And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.” (Ezek. 11:19-20).

God alone can truly change human nature. And God will one day set His hand to do just that. As He does for today’s true Christians, God will change mankind’s very nature and replace it with His own. Peter wrote that Christians become “partakers of the divine nature.” (1 Peter 1:4). This mind—the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5)—is produced in the Christian by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. John wrote: “. . . And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us.” (1 John 3:24).

It is by this means that man’s nature will be changed. Man will not somehow “evolve” a new nature. That change of heart that is necessary to bring about a true transformation of the human spirit cannot be humanistically induced. It must be effected by God. The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans: “Do not be conformed to this world [*“civilization,” in Leonard’s terminology*] but be transformed by the renewal of your mind . . .” (Rom. 12:2). It is only the renewing of man’s mind by means of the working of the Holy Spirit that can bring about the transformation of man! And such a transformation is coming!

upon this good green earth. Isaiah spoke of this: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him, *he will bring forth justice to the nations. . . . He will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth*, and the coastlands wait for his law" (Isa. 42:1-4).

Jesus Christ will have a thousand-year opportunity, with full backing from God the Father, to put into practice His own teachings as recorded in the four New Testament Gospels! Figuratively speaking, He will be able to say to all the world: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; *for I am gentle and lowly in heart*, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and *my burden is light*" (Matt. 11:28-30).

The millennium will be a time of rest—a thousand-year sabbath for mankind. It will be a time of restoring, building, growing and undoing the incredible damage left in the wake of six thousand years of human misrule. It will *not* be a period of stress and pain such as we live in today! Christ's millennial "burden" will truly be "light"!

Isaiah describes the new age as a time of comforting, healing, forgiving. He says of Jerusalem; a city which has seen centuries of strife and bloodshed: "*Comfort, comfort my people*, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her *warfare is ended*, that her iniquity is pardoned. . . ." (Isa. 40:1-2).

Mankind will experience for the first time on a grand scale the incredible *gentleness* and compassion of a loving Savior. Jesus will rule as a good Shepherd over the flock of God, which will consist of all of mankind. "He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms, he will carry them in his bosom, and *gently lead* those that are with young" (Isa. 40:11).

Never before has mankind experienced this kind of leadership! Never such a beautiful blend of strength and compassion, power and gentleness, authority without tyranny. It will truly be a marvelous new age in every sense of the word!

The darkness of "this present evil world" will have given way to the brilliant light of the loving rule of Jesus Christ. Kings, princes and rulers of every kind will be attracted to the radiance of the Great King! The Prince of Peace will teach them the *way* of peace which they "know not" (Isa. 59:8;

Rom. 3:17). The new Israel, and ultimately the whole world, will be illuminated by the wisdom of the Son of God: "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth [as it does today!], and thick darkness the peoples [the world is spiritually blinded—cf. Isa. 29:9-10]; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising" (Isa. 60:1-3).

Following the arrival of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of "the dead in Christ," and the binding of Satan, a new age will dawn. Darkness will yield to the light of God's way and to His Messiah. Jesus Christ will set His hand to bring about the "restitution of all things" (see Acts 3:21, KJV). The government of God will be restored to the earth and peace will break out all over the globe. In the next chapter we will see more specifically just what conditions will be like during the new age.

# CONDITIONS DURING THE MILLENNIUM

**W**hat will the world tomorrow be like? How will it be different from this present time? We have already seen that Satan's influence will be non-existent. That, in itself, will make a titanic difference!

We know also that God's laws will be taught and enforced and that all peoples will go up to Jerusalem to learn of God's ways. But what social reforms will Christ bring about? What about the cities of tomorrow? What about health care and personal security? We have seen that Jesus will bring about justice in every remote corner of the earth, but what about the sick and the crippled? What about those who have had the misfortune to be born blind or deaf?

Perhaps no prophet more beautifully captured the vision of God's utopia than did Isaiah. Inspired by the Holy Spirit (cf. II Peter 1:21), the prophet wrote in glowing terms of a new age in which "the wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom . . ." (Isa. 35:1). He envisioned a time when "the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstepped; then shall the lame man leap like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert" (verses 5-6).

What a magnificent picture! Universal healing! A world reclaimed! Isaiah pictured a world that could not possibly be brought about by any humanistic ideology or by technology alone. He saw a world in which man would once again be re-

united with his environment. He prophesied of an age in which harmony would be restored at every level. Man would again learn to "dress and keep" his earthly "Garden of Eden." Man would again be given dominion over the lesser creatures of this earth. Even the very nature of animals will be changed if you interpret Isaiah literally. Notice Isaiah 11:6: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid [goat], and the calf and the lion and the fatting together, and a *little child* shall lead them!"

There's *harmony* for you! Isaiah goes on to say, ". . . And the lion shall eat straw like the ox" (verse 7). When, in human experience, has this ever happened? Never! It is yet ahead. Isaiah was clearly speaking of a new and different age.

Even cities will be radically different. Gone will be smog, congestion, pollution and ugliness. Cities will be *planned*, believe it or not! God is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33). He does all things, including the building of cities, "decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40). Out of the confused, depressing rubble of today's cities will arise new and magnificent structures in which to live, work centers, parks and recreation areas. Isaiah speaks of grand city-reclamation schemes: "They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations" (Isa. 61:4).

Isaiah was not referring to the postexilic period of ancient Israel when he made these glowing prophecies. Rather, he envisioned a new order, a world utterly different from his own time or any time since he wrote. He obviously had in mind a futuristic time of transcendently higher values and circumstances. His language is too exalted, too glowing, to have been describing some period in man's premillennial history. As Bernard W. Anderson puts it, "Isaiah's picture of the New Age was so elevated in grandeur, so transfigured in the light of eternity, that no ordinary historical era, least of all the postexilic period of Judaism, could measure up to his vision. . . . He pictured no ordinary Jerusalem, but a New Jerusalem which would be a sign to all mankind that Yahweh is King" (*Understanding the Old Testament*, p. 473).

Isaiah's magnificent vision of the new age was shared by others. Ezekiel also prophesied of a time when God would "cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt" (Ezek. 36:33). He went on to say that "the land that was desolate shall be tilled, instead of being the desolation

that it was in the sight of all who passed by. And they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are now inhabited and fortified'" (verses 34-35).

Amos also spoke of the restoration of Israel's cities: "I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit" (Amos 9:14).

Here then we see a vision of a new age of utopian peace and harmony, a pastoral period of rest and rejuvenation for a weary, worn-out earth. We see Jesus Christ as Savior, Healer, Ruler and King of kings presiding over a renewed human society in which justice prevails. We find men attracted to the light of God's way like so many moths to a glowing light bulb. We see a world of rebuilding, restoration and order. Wars are a thing of the past. Racism, tribalism and rabid nationalism will no longer brand their burning scars on a tortured humanity. There will be one world government—one world order upon which all will agree. Nations and peoples will work together in harmony and cooperation. Today's materialism and utilitarianism will give way to the divine standard. All of the world's isms and ideologies will be replaced by a universal theocracy.

Man will at last be able to realize his full human potential in Christ. For the first time on any significant scale man will begin to realize who and what he is! He will know what it means to be created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27)!

## BEYOND THE MILLENNIUM

**W**e have seen how the thousand-year reign of Christ on this earth will be a time of restoring, rebuilding and of turning man to his Creator. But what happens when the thousand years are completed?

The apostle John was given a startling insight into the answer to that question on the Isle of Patmos. He received, directly from Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:8-19), a vision of a future world. He prophetically saw conditions thousands of years beyond his own time. It must have been a mind-boggling experience for the elderly apostle! John saw apocalyptic visions concerning both the immediate and the distant future, including the millennium. We have already read that Satan will be temporarily loosed from his prison at the end of the millennium. He will go out to deceive and mobilize those who are still gullible enough to follow him. (Man will always be a free moral agent.) Then his human followers will be destroyed and Satan will be tormented forever. Apparently his being cast into the lake of fire is a statement on his spiritual condition. He is "twice dead," beyond spiritual repair, so to speak. He cannot or will not repent. He must be eternally punished. The book of Jude may indicate something of Satan's fate: "These are blemishes on your love feasts [Church feasts], as they boldly carouse together, looking after themselves; waterless clouds, carried along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, *twice dead*, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; *wandering stars*

for whom the nether gloom of darkness has been reserved forever" (Jude 12-13).

We know this is referring to human individuals who were fellowshipping with the true believers of Jude's day—but it could also be typifying the angels who rebelled against God at an earlier time (cf. Jude 6). Stars are sometimes used as symbols for angels (Rev. 1:20). But the language is highly figurative and excessive literalization could well distort the intended meaning.

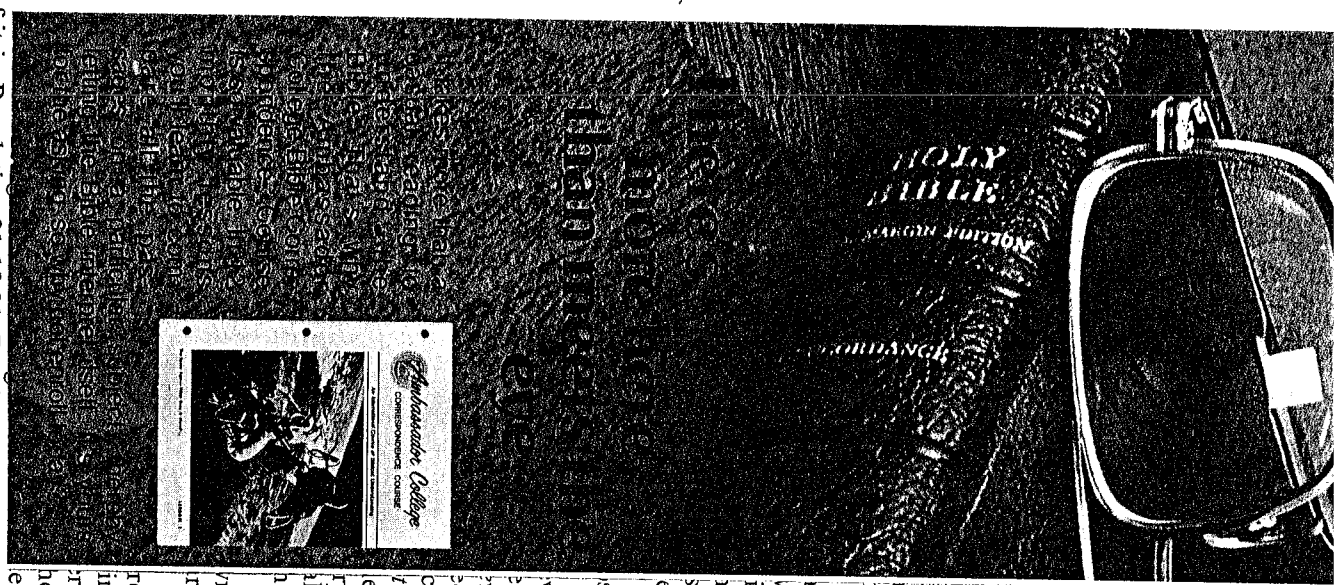
In any event, we know that Satan will be punished for all eternity. He will never again tyrannize mankind or darken the surface of God's good earth. The works of the Destroyer will themselves be destroyed (1 John 3:8).

Once the devil is finally out of the picture another spectacular event will occur. John describes it in Revelation 20:5: "The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended." At the end of the millennium there will be a great resurrection of all those who were not included in the first resurrection which occurred at the beginning of the millennium (Rev. 20:4). This will include the broad mass of all humanity throughout history! These millions will then be given their first opportunity for salvation. (Please write for our free booklet *After Death, Then What?* and our free article *Is This the Only Day of Salvation?* for a more complete exposition of this important question.)

At the conclusion of this period, commonly called the "Great White Throne Judgment," all those who insist on going their own way will be punished. All who have refused the hand of a loving Creator who wanted nothing more than to give them eternal life and joy forevermore will find themselves eternally "terminated"! "Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death [hence the expression "twice dead"], the lake of fire; and if any one's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:14-15).

At this juncture, all people who have ever lived will be in one of two possible states: 1) They will have become immortal members of the family of God; or 2) they will have ceased to exist! God's millennial phase of the plan of salvation will be complete. At this point Jesus will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having fulfilled His will. Paul describes this in 1 Corinthians 15:22-28: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his

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description of it in Revelation 21:15-21. Read those incredible verses and try to wrap your mind around the concept of such a magnificent city!

own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 'For God has put all things in subjection under his feet.' But when it says, 'All things are put in subjection under him,' it is plain that he is excepted who put all things under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to every one [all in all—KJV]."

Jesus Christ will have successfully carried out God's plan during the millennial period. The whole universe will have been subdued. Everything will be under control. Death will be a thing of the past—the vast majority of human beings who have ever lived will have achieved salvation through Christ. Jesus will hand over the reins to His Father in complete obedience and submission.

The universe will now be readied for the next, and most dramatic phase of the divine plan!

"Then," wrote John, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, *new Jerusalem*, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, *the dwelling of God is with men*. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away'"! (Rev. 21:1-4.)

What an incredible vision! God the Father coming down to dwell with men in a totally new Jerusalem! A totally refurbished earth! The *ultimate* utopia!

Can you imagine it? A pain-free world in which there will be no death, crying, or misery of any kind! A world in which God and Christ reign side by side over a peaceful, eternal Kingdom. That is exactly what John envisioned. And he saw the new Jerusalem in great detail. He gives us a vivid description of it in Revelation 21:15-21. Read those incredible verses and try to wrap your mind around the concept of such a magnificent city!

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your over to you are having turned this will. Paul describes this in I Corinthians 15:22-28: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his



Notice the fantastic words of verses 22-23: "And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb [Christ]. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb!"

Here we see the final, magnificent culmination of God's new age! The light of God will fill the universe! It will be a glorious age of unparalleled grandeur. "And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 22:5).

Today we see through a darkened glass. Our vision of tomorrow's world is limited by our own humanity. But God is still on His throne in the heavens. He is still working out His master plan step by step. Each day we come closer to the end of this present evil age and nearer to that final glorious age of ages. All of mankind was created to be included in that new world of righteousness and peace. God wishes to share that eternal blessing with every soul who ever lived from the time of Adam to the last human to be born of woman. God wants you to be a part of His utopia!

Whether you are privileged to be there or not is at least partly up to you. If God has called you and revealed this truth to you, it is up to you to act upon it. "The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let him who hears say, 'Come.' And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price" (Rev. 22:17). God has made His appeal. What will be your response? He says, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city [new Jerusalem] by the gates" (verse 14).

To "wash your robes" means to "clean up" your life—to repent and accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Master forever! It means to yield yourself in obedience to the law of Christ and to have faith in His sacrifice. It means to become reconciled to God from whom you have been alienated by your sins (Isa. 59:2). It means to turn from Satan's way and submit to God's. This is Satan's world (II Cor. 4:4). Those who live Satan's way (John 8:44; Eph. 2:1-2; I John 3:8) will find that they will perish along with his world. It was the same apostle John who wrote, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of

the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides for ever" (I John 2:15-17).

In God's new world there will be no evil, no rebellion, no injustice—only love, peace, harmony and beauty. Those who choose to go their own way will be allowed to do so—right on into the lake of fire! They will not be included in the Kingdom of God. God will not force them to submit to Him. He says, "Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy..." (Rev. 22:11). Such people will not be included in God's eternal plan: "Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and every one who loves and practices falsehood" (verse 15).

But God also says, "... And the righteous shall do right, and the holy shall be holy" (verse 11, last part). It is these who will be included in the new Jerusalem of God! Those who decide now to accept God's great invitation will dwell with Him for all eternity.

A new age is coming and you can be included in it. Jesus says to you and to me, "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end... He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:12, 20.)

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