

Paradise Without Pollution

Chapter I

Paradise Without Pollution

“And God created the man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said to them: Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it,—and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the bird of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth on the land.

And God said—Lo! I have given to you—every herb yielding seed which is on the face of all the land, and every tree wherein is the fruit of a tree yielding seed,—to you shall it be for food; and to every living thing of the land—and to every bird of the heavens, and to everything that moveth on the land wherein is a living soul, every green herb for food.”

—*Genesis 1:27-29, Rotherham*

IN THE opening paragraph of an article entitled, “The Ravaged Environment,” which appeared in **Newsweek**, the writer observed:

“It seems the curse of modern man continually to confront new possibilities of self-destruction. He emerged from World War II armed with nuclear weaponry that soon gave him power to obliterate all human life. His population has since grown at a rate that could threaten disaster on a global scale. And now he has come face to face with a new man-made peril, the poisoning of his natural environment with noxious doses of chemicals, garbage, fumes, sewage, heat, ugliness and urban overcrowding. Nearly unnoticed, the scourge of pollution has already spread so far that a few scientists say only a drastic cure can prevent devastation as thorough as that of nuclear holocaust. Even to less doleful prophets, the danger seems sufficient to warrant a sudden boom in the science of ecology, which examines the precarious relationships between living things and their surroundings.”

We are living in a chaotic and suffering world. For years it has been a well-known fact that the two leading nations of the world—the United States and Russia—have it in their power to unleash sufficient nuclear weapons of destruction to kill the entire human race many times over. For a number of years the human race has been warned of the dangers of the current population explosion—that the quantity of food and its distribution will become less and less adequate for the needs of a population which is doubling every thirty or forty years.

And now we have the grave danger of environmental pollution thrust upon us, which, regardless of what efforts man may be able to make to alleviate it, is constantly being made worse by the rapidly increasing population. Some scientists are fearful that even now our poisoned environment is planting potentials of destruction within humans which will reveal themselves in later generations when it will be too late to do anything about it.

The news media of the world are constantly calling our attention to the already baneful results of environmental pollution and the efforts which are being made to combat it. There is nothing which we could

hope to add to this information which is not already known. Our chief interest in the subject is the manner in which this further failure of man may be related to the outworking of the divine plan for the redemption and recovery of man from sin and death.

Indeed, man has miserably failed in working out the destiny designed for him by his Creator. This is because, in the very beginning of his experience, man chose to disobey his Creator's laws. It was then that selfishness became the motivating power in human activity, and throughout the ages selfishness has continued to lead humanity into all sorts of dilemmas fraught with frustration, suffering, and death. There has hardly been a time when wars did not rage in some part of the earth. Man's inhumanity to man has made countless millions mourn. Through it all, those who have maintained a semblance of faith in God have kept hoping for a better time to come, which up to now has not come.

The Earth Being Filled

God's command to multiply and fill the earth has progressed throughout the centuries, and now that the earth is nearly fully populated it is under conditions which are causing mankind to look ahead with fear as to what the results may be. Man was commanded to subdue the earth, but now, in the final analysis, it would seem, the best he can do is to pollute it to the point where it might well be incapable of sustaining life of any kind.

God provided every necessary food-producing tree to sustain his human creation, but man is killing them off with poison fumes spewed forth from his inventions, and by other poisons, such as insecticides. After more than six thousand years of existing on the earth, man has not only failed to subdue it, but has defiled it to the point where, unless a sudden turnabout is accomplished, the race could become poisoned and die in the very place that was originally designed to be a beautiful paradise home for him forever.

Minerals

Although no special mention is made in the Bible that God provided mineral deposits in the earth for man's use, we believe that this was the case, and man has been using these minerals, at least to a limited degree, almost from the beginning of his existence. Tubalcain, one of the close descendants of Adam, is spoken of as "an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron." Here, apparently, was the first mineralogist.

The use of minerals is referred to considerably in the Bible. Much gold, and copper, and silver were used in the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness and its furnishings. Even larger quantities were employed later in the building of Solomon's temple. Solomon had his copper and iron mines, and shipped these metals to various parts of the then known world. In return, he imported gold. But in those remote days no one dreamed of the industrial age which would be made possible by the use of metals stored in the earth at the time of creation.

Nor is there anything in the Bible to indicate that the ancients had knowledge of the gas, coal, and oil deposits which are such vital factors in our industrial age. A few ancients had dim knowledge of the existence of electricity, but did not know how to harness it for the use of man. This has come about in modern times, and has a very important part in the technology of our times. There is reason to believe that the widespread use of metals, coal, oil, and electricity was reserved by the Creator for the very time in which we are now living, which is described in the prophecies as "the time of the end"—not the end of time, nor the end of human experience on the earth, but the end of man's futile efforts to rule himself, and to bring the earth under control for his peace, happiness, health, and life.—Dan. 12:4

As Daniel reveals, the prophetic "time of the end" was to be characterized by a great increase of knowledge, and running to and fro—much and rapid travel. It is in this same time period in the divine plan

that, as Daniel's prophecy reveals, there was to be "a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation." (Dan. 12:1) This "trouble" was to result from the standing up of "Michael," one of the titles which the Bible ascribes to Jesus as the divine Christ. In this prophecy Michael "stands up," which is a symbol of divine intervention in the affairs of men.

Another name given to the particular period in "the time of the end" in which we are now living is "the day of the Lord [Jehovah]." (Isa. 13:6,9) It is also the day of God's preparation for the establishment of the long-promised messianic kingdom. (Nahum 2:3,4) It is a time in the plan of God associated with the return and early years of the presence of Christ, the ultimate object of his return being to establish the kingdom of promise which will bring universal and everlasting peace to all mankind.

Signs of His Presence

When Jesus was on earth at the time of his first advent, and just a short time before his crucifixion as man's Redeemer, his disciples asked him what would be the signs of his second presence, and the end of the world, or age. The question they asked was, "Tell us, when these things will be?" and "What will be the sign of thy presence, and of the consummation of the age?" (Matt. 24:3, *Diaglott*) In response to these questions Jesus gave a number of outstanding "signs" which would mark the fact of his presence, and of the end of the age.

One of these signs was, "Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows." In I Thessalonians 5:1 the Apostle Paul wrote, "Of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child."

The Greek word here translated "travail" is the same one that is translated "sorrows" in Jesus' prophecy that the rising of nation against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, would be the beginning of sorrows. And, as Paul indicates, these pains of travail in the day of the Lord would lead to the sudden, or unexpected destruction, not of the earth, but of man's selfish social order.

We believe that World War I was one of these spasms of destructive trouble. World War II was another. It is a sad commentary on the unwisdom and selfishness of man that the treasures of God caused to be stored up in the earth should be employed in the works of destruction instead of as instruments of peace. True, they have been used widely for peaceful pursuits, but to the total disregard of the manner in which their side effects were polluting the air we breathe, and the water we drink, destroying plant and vegetable life, as well as bird life, and the fish of our rivers, lakes, and oceans.

These side effects were probably not realized to any great extent by the technicians until recent years, but now the terrible harvest of poisons is rapidly catching up with us, and is contributing to yet another spasm of destruction upon man's world. In presenting the signs of his presence, Jesus quoted Daniel's prophecy (12:1) concerning the "time of trouble," and he indicated that a further sign of his presence and of the end of the age would be a time of "great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."—Matt. 24:21,22

Here is a prophetic sign which is more far-reaching than simply the matter of nation rising against nation. Here the tribulation is said to be so devastating that should it be permitted to continue, no human flesh would survive. As the article in **Newsweek** pointed out, we now have this possibility confronting us on three fronts—through nuclear weaponry; the pollution of our environment, and the population explosion. There are those

who claim that unless the population increase can be brought under control, all efforts to clean up the environment will fail.

It is now estimated that by the close of the twentieth century earth's population will reach the six billion mark. This will greatly increase the hazards of pollution. Even today, half the population of the earth is without adequate food supplies. Scientists are expressing the fear that the millions of undernourished mothers will bring a generation of weaklings into the world, and that as the population increases and hunger becomes more and more widespread and acute this danger will be compounded. Man is multiplying and filling the earth all right, just as God commanded, but what a colossal failure he is making of properly providing for his ever-increasing offspring!

Without doubt the food-supplying potentials of the earth are great enough to provide an abundance for a population that fills the earth completely, in harmony with God's arrangements; but man, in his selfishness, is incapable of making proper use of these potentials, and the earth is becoming increasingly polluted. It seems reasonable to conclude that the Creator has permitted this situation to develop for the purpose of teaching man in this final lesson on the permission of evil that he cannot continue on his own selfish way and expect to survive as a species.

Only the Creator has the solutions for the crisis conditions which now face troubled man. Truly we are living in a time of "great tribulation," just as Jesus foretold when presenting the signs of his presence and the end of the age. And just as Jesus said, it is tribulation which ultimately could well destroy the human race entirely; but he has given us the assurance that this will not be permitted. As Jesus explained, this time of destructive tribulation will be cut short before all flesh is destroyed.

The Elect

According to the Common Version translation of Jesus' prophecy, he said that "for the elect's sake" the days of tribulation would be shortened, but this is not a good translation. The word "sake" is not in the original Greek text at all, so what Jesus said was that for, or by, the elect the tribulation would be shortened. What did he mean by this? The Scriptures give us a very definite answer to this question. The "elect" are those whom the Creator has chosen to be the rulers in his long-promised messianic kingdom.

Jesus is the pre-eminent One among these, the great "King of kings and Lord of lords." Jesus proved his worthiness of this high position in his Heavenly Father's plan by laying down his life to redeem mankind from sin and death. When Jesus was on trial for his life he was asked by Pilate if he were a king, and his reply was, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world."—John 18:37

When Jesus was hanging on the cross, one of the thieves who was being crucified with him, asked, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." (Luke 23:42) Jesus replied to him, saying, "Verily I say unto thee today, Thou shalt be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43) Jesus knew that the purpose of his kingdom would be to establish paradise conditions world-wide, and that in that blessed future time of his kingdom the thief would be awakened from death and have the opportunity of enjoying the blessings of paradise with the other billions of the human race who would likewise then be restored to life and to harmony with the Creator.

But first it was essential that Jesus give his flesh for the life of the world. (John 6:51) The Prophet Isaiah foretold that Jesus would "pour out his soul unto death," and that his soul, or his life, would be made "an offering for sin." (Isa. 53:6-12) The Apostle Paul wrote concerning Jesus, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (I Tim. 2:5,6) The Greek word here translated "ransom" means "a price to correspond."

The reference is to the fact that Jesus' perfect human life corresponded with the perfect man Adam, who

willfully transgressed divine law and brought upon himself and upon his offspring the condemnation of death, Man has been falling deeper and deeper into the quagmire of sin and death ever since Adam's transgression, and nothing he could do, nothing he can do now, can save him from the ultimate result of transgression, which would be the destruction of the human species itself.

But God, in his love, made a plan whereby this collision course of mankind was to be turned around, and that plan was that Jesus should be made flesh, and give his life as a ransom to redeem Adam and his race from death. Jesus voluntarily entered into this arrangement, and that is why he virtually surrendered to his enemies and allowed them to crucify him. Yes, they killed the future King of earth. From the human standpoint this might well seem to spell defeat for God's messianic kingdom plan. It did not, however, because the mighty power of the Creator raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him to glory and power, not as a human, but as a divine being. After his resurrection Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."—Matt. 28:18

Associate Kings

Shortly before he was crucified Jesus said to his disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go ... I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:3) This promise by Jesus is usually taken to mean simply that his followers will spend eternity in heaven with him. But it means more than this, for the Scriptures reveal that his faithful followers, those who suffer and die with him, when restored to life and exalted to glory with him, will be associate rulers with him in the messianic kingdom. Paul wrote, "It is a faithful saying: for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him."—II Tim. 2:11,12

These are pictured in Revelation 20:6 as coming forth from death in what is described as "the first resurrection," and the purpose of their thus being raised from the dead, the text declares, is that "they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." The work of God ever since the first advent of Christ, so far as his plan of salvation is concerned, has been the calling from the world, and the preparation, of this group to reign with Christ. It has already taken nearly two thousand years, and the work is still going on.

This group, like Jesus, are referred to in the Scriptures as the "elect" of God. The Apostle Peter, writing to these faithful ones in his day, addressed them as being "elect according to the foreknowledge of God ... through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience." (I Pet. 1:2) This is not an arbitrary election of individuals, but a calling out from the world of those willing and anxious to be conformed to the image of Christ. Paul wrote, "For whom he [God] did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son."—Rom. 8:29

This little company of faithful followers of Christ, as we have noted, is not yet completed, but when it is, and all are brought forth in "the first resurrection" and united with Jesus as the new, spiritual rulers of the world, one of their first functions will be, as Jesus has indicated, to bring to a halt the time of "great tribulation" which is now threatening to destroy the human species. The Bible does not reveal how this will be accomplished. It simply assures us that it will be. And our faith is not strained to believe Jesus' promise when we remember that the "elect" will be capable of employing the same mighty power that raised Jesus from the dead, and that brings forth his associate rulers from death and exalts them to live and reign with him.

We do not know how the great nations of earth will be caused to withdraw the threat of nuclear destruction. We do not know how the messianic kingdom agencies will clean the air and the water and the soil, so they can function as they were intended, to give life to man. We do not know how the failure of man to subdue the earth will be turned into a glorious accomplishment under the direction of the divine Christ—but we know that these things will be accomplished.

The Mountain Kingdom

One of the Bible's symbols of the messianic kingdom is a "mountain," and Isaiah 11:9 reads, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." No pollutants will then be allowed to poison the air, the water, and the land, causing disease and death. The Lord will know how to accomplish this great boon for humanity.

Again we quote from Isaiah: "In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it, And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, and we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."—Isa. 25:6-9

The "salvation" which will reach mankind in general during the thousand years of Christ's kingdom will be restoration to perfection of human life here on earth. Only those exalted to be associated with Jesus in the spiritual rulership phase of his kingdom will have spirit life.

Nor will there be lack of room on the earth for those now living and for all who have died, despite the present population explosion. The great Creator who commanded our first parents to multiply and fill the earth will be abundantly able to bring that aspect of his design to a conclusion when the proper time comes, and he will know when that proper time has arrived. Today man is being frightened by what his own efforts are producing. One writer asks, "Where has man failed?" The answer to that question is that human selfishness has led to failure on every hand.

But during the thousand years of Christ's kingdom man will learn the advantages of love as against selfishness, and this alone will solve many of the problems which have perplexed the human race during the reign of sin and death. But the learning of this lesson will be possible only under the governmental arrangements of the kingdom of Christ. The names "Zion" and "Jerusalem" are used in the Bible to symbolize the kingdom and its arrangements, and in Micah 4:2 we read, "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 from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

Yes, there will be righteous laws in that kingdom, and the Word of the Lord will circulate freely among the people; and through obedience to that Word, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit which then will be poured out upon all flesh, selfishness will be eradicated from the hearts of the people. Thus not only will the pollution of the air, water, and soil be brought to an end, but the pollution of human hearts and minds by selfishness will also be removed from the willing and obedient in that glorious earthly paradise of promise.

Chapter II

The Nations Healed

"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life,

which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the trees were for the healing of the nations.” “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come, And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”
—Revelation 22:1,2,17

WE ARE living in a sick world. It is a sickness unto death which began more than six thousand years ago, and today has reached crisis proportions. The chief diseases which have brought about this crisis are sin and selfishness. Sin is a flouting of the laws of God, and selfishness is an inordinate seeking of one's own best interests regardless of what the consequences to others might be. Some of the symptoms of these fatal diseases are pride, hatred, and a lust for power which brooks no interference, even at the cost of murder.

Perhaps one of the most vivid descriptions of this fatal sickness of human society is the one given to us by the Apostle Paul when he wrote, "In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good; traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."—II Tim. 3:1-4

At this time when the earth, the sea, the rivers, the lakes, and the atmosphere are all being polluted by man's inability properly to use the resources which God has provided for him, we have this worst of all defilements, which is the pollution of the human mind and heart by sin and selfishness. These pollutants have always been abroad throughout the earth, plaguing mankind and the various societies he has tried to create; but now in these "last days" the situation has become acute, for as we have seen, this disease of sin and selfishness has now reached crisis proportions.

In this "time of the end," when the prophetic increase of knowledge should be providing not only an affluent life, but a peaceful, happy, and healthy one for the people of all nations, in many respects the very opposite is true. Of what value is it to humanity that men can reach the moon, when countless millions throughout the earth are starving, without homes, and in constant fear of being destroyed by poisons which selfish man is spewing into the air, water, and land in his gross misuse of the natural resources of the earth which the Lord has so bountifully provided.

Of what real satisfaction can it be to know that technology has contrived instruments which can fly to Mars, when that same technology is stockpiling deadly weapons of war with terrifying potentials of destruction in sufficient quantities to destroy the human species a hundred times over? These paradoxes arising out of human selfishness certainly raise the question as to what the great Creator is doing about this dilemma which has been thrust upon an unsuspecting world.

Dilemma Foretold

The present chaos and distress which have come unexpectedly upon the world are not a surprise to the Lord, for, there are many prophecies of his Word which have forecast such a condition. One of them, presented in symbolic language, is found in Isaiah 24:1-5, which we quote (*Revised Standard Version*):

"Behold, the Lord will lay waste the earth and make it desolate, and he will twist its surface and scatter its inhabitants. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the slave, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the creditor, so with the debtor. The earth shall be utterly laid waste and utterly despoiled; for the Lord has spoken this word. The earth mourns and withers, the world languishes and withers; the

heavens languish together with the earth. The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant.”

Many times the words “earth” and “world” when used in the prophecies of the Bible denote a social structure which may exist on the planet at any given time, one of the important parts of which is the people. However, the literal earth is also often referred to in the prophecies, and sometimes there is an intermingling of the symbolic and literal in the same prophecy. An example of this is Psalm 46:6,10. Verse 6 reads, “The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; He utters His voice, the earth melts.” (*RSV*) In this verse the earth “melts,” but in verse 10 the earth still exists, and God’s name is exalted in it. We quote: “Be still, and know that I am God. I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.”—*RSV*

In this prophecy of the time in which we are now living it is the symbolic earth that melts, whereas the literal earth remains, and by divine decree to the raging nations, peace is brought to the people, and God’s name becomes exalted among the people. So in the prophecy quoted above from Isaiah 24, we find the symbolic earth “twisted,” and we find a leveling of all segments of human society, and finally a polluting of the earth, and certainly this latter is being fulfilled literally today, to the great consternation of the worldly-wise.

God’s Remedy

As pointed out in Psalm 46:10, in the Lord’s due time he will say to the raging nations of earth, “Be still, and know that I am God.” This suggests divine intervention in the affairs of men at a juncture when, if left to their own devices, the sin-sick and selfish people of the earth would utterly fail in their efforts to solve the problems which they have brought upon themselves. Thus, in our approach to the subject, we should keep in mind that the great Creator is still interested in his human creatures, and will deliver them. Man will not be permitted to destroy himself, either by nuclear weaponry or by pollutants.

God’s wonderful plan for the salvation of mankind from the result of his own folly and selfishness is presented to us in the Bible in various ways. The outline of one of these begins with the story of the Garden of Eden. We read that in this garden the Lord provided “every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden.”—Gen. 2:9,10

The Original Paradise

The word “paradise” simply means “a garden,” and that beautiful spot prepared for man “eastward in Eden” was a most beautiful and wonderful paradise. Mistakenly, the idea of paradise has been associated with some sort of spiritual existence far removed from this planet. But God’s intention from the beginning was that the earth was to be man’s paradise, and that small section of land which God prepared especially for our first parents was but a sample of what the whole earth was to be, and yet will be, when God’s glorious design concerning man has been fully accomplished.

In the original paradise much emphasis was placed on beauty. In describing the trees of the garden, those “pleasant to the sight” are mentioned first, and then those which were “good for food.” We conclude from this that God not only made preparation to sustain the lives of his human creatures, but he wanted them also to enjoy their lives through appreciation of the beautiful things of creation by which they were surrounded. God was delighted with his human creatures, and he wanted them to delight themselves in him by being constantly reminded of his love and care.

How beautiful indeed the earth truly is, or at least was, before man began to pollute it with refuse and poisons. Is there anything more majestic than a range of mountains which pushes its higher peaks at times above the clouds, and which are laden with snow the year around? How beautiful are the rivers, the lakes,

and the oceans. Then there is the great variety of trees, each with its own particular type of beauty, and all “pleasant to the sight.” Every square mile of the earth’s surface has its special type of beauty—all designed by the Creator to add to the value and zest of living.

Even the food-producing trees of the earth are beautiful. And think of the beauty of growing wheat and other grain as it is wafted to and fro by gentle summer breezes. And all this beauty of landscape and foliage as it left the hands of God in the garden “eastward in Eden” must have been beyond words to describe. This was man’s home, and he was commanded to “subdue” the remainder of the earth and to fill it with his progeny. It was a glorious outlook, and could have worked to the eternal glory of the Creator and the everlasting joy of man.

Actually this will yet be the case, for while man has failed through disobedience, and has defiled the earth which he was commanded to subdue, God’s redemptive plan through Christ is designed to restore his human creatures to their lost home, which, when the plan is completed, will see this whole planet one gorgeous paradise, providing health, joy, and life for humanity which by then will fill the whole earth.

The Forbidden Fruit

The original paradise, in addition to its lifegiving trees, contained one called “the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” (Gen. 2:9) It is not necessary that we know the nature of this tree. The important lesson for us is that our first parents were forbidden to partake of it, and the death penalty was attached to disobedience. At the same time, however, during the long centuries since their disobedience, the human race has been acquiring an experimental knowledge of evil, and during the thousand years of Christ’s kingdom will have the opportunity to acquire a knowledge of good, which will enable them finally to make a considered choice between the two.

In the Garden of Eden there was also a river. We are told that this river “went out of Eden to water the garden.” Thus in that original paradise we have the lifegiving trees, and we have a river. However, because our first parents disobeyed God they were driven out of that garden into the unfinished earth to die. The record is, “The Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”—Gen. 3:23,24

The Apostle Paul wrote, “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom. 6:23) Death was the penalty which was inflicted upon man. The “thorns and thistles” and the banishment from Eden and from the trees of life were the means used by the Lord to inflict that penalty. And how efficient these “executioners” have been. For more than six thousand years man has been a suffering and dying creature, unable to overcome the hazards of his environment and keep himself alive.

It seemed that as a result of the industrial age better progress would be made, but again man is failing. The technology which might have lifted him above at least some of the drudgery of an ebbing life is now polluting his environment more than ever before. We have learned to destroy thorns and thistles and other pests, only to poison ourselves, birds, and fish, with polluted air, water, and land. Man made a strenuous effort to lift himself up by his own bootstraps, only to find that human selfishness has him hopelessly bogged down in the pollutants of his own making.

God’s Kingdom

While throughout the centuries all human plans and efforts to better the condition of the fallen race have failed, God has a plan which will not fail, which is his messianic kingdom. In brief this plan is, through Christ, to re-establish divine authority in the earth. It is suggested in the prayer which Jesus taught to his disciples,

“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” (Matt. 6:10) Man is in his present and worsening dilemma because of disobedience to divine law, and only by obedience to the Creator’s law will he be able to survive and to enjoy peace and health and life.

This kingdom remedy for the many His of man which have been brought on by disobedience is presented to us in various ways in the Bible. One of these is contained in Revelation 22:1,2. Verse 1 speaks of a “river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb,” The “throne” of God suggests the exercise of divine authority in the earth. And this is also the throne of the “Lamb,” which reminds us that the exercise of this authority will be through Christ, who died for the sins of the world, and thus made possible the re-establishment of the divine will among the world of mankind for whom he died.

The “River”

Flowing out from “the throne of God and of the Lamb” is a “pure river of water of life, clear as crystal.” In some places in the Bible water is used to symbolize a cleansing agency in the heart and the mind, a cleansing by the truth, but here it represents life—it is “a pure river of water of life,” and it is “clear as crystal.” While this is a symbolic river, as we read about it we are reminded of how man is now polluting the natural rivers of the earth, so that instead of being lifegiving agencies quite the opposite is becoming more and more true. How hopeless would be the outlook for man’s future on this earth but for the wonderful provisions the Lord has made!

Verse 2 continues: “In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life.” When our first parents transgressed the divine law they were driven out of Eden in order that they might not be able to partake of the tree of life which the Lord had planted there—“So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”—Gen. 3:24

God saw to it then that man would have no opportunity to perpetuate his life. He had sinned, and now the penalty, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,” fell upon him, and there was to be no way of man’s getting himself out from under it. But God still loved his earthly creatures, and in due time made a provision of his own for their escape from death. That provision was Jesus, who in the symbology of the prophecies became the slain Lamb, the “Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.”—John 1:29

And now we find that Lamb empowered with governmental authority, and from “the throne of God and of the Lamb” is flowing the water of life—not a limited supply, but a river—and on either side of this river is the “tree of life.” It is as though in the outworking of the divine plan instructions were given from the “throne” that those cherubims should no longer keep the people away from the tree of life, that the time had now come for them to return to paradise where they could have free access to the source of life of which they had been deprived.

An Abundant Fruitage

Concerning that future tree of life, the prophecy states that it will “bare twelve manner of fruits,” and that it will yield her fruit “every month.” The numerology here involved is interesting, in that it suggests a continuous, never-failing source of lifegiving fruit. It is symbolic language, of course, but again we are reminded of how miserably man has failed to provide the literal necessities of life.

It is true that in certain western countries, such as North America, and in many parts of Europe, food is in plentiful supply, and we are prone to think of the “world” from the standpoint of our restricted surroundings. The truth is that on the earth as a whole many millions starve to death each year, and half of humanity never has enough to eat. We speak of our affluent society, but let us remember that our world is a very small one,

which, while it may be well fed, is quite unlike the world at large, so great a part of which is hungry and starving.

We know not the details of how the Lord will supply an abundance of food for the countless millions who will ultimately be filling the earth in keeping with the divine decree, but we know that he is fully able to do it. While we need not think of the fruit on the symbolic “tree of life” as representing literal food, we know that man will need food. And then, supplied with all the wholesome food that is needed, through faith and obedience the symbolic fruits of the tree of life will be available and will enable him to live forever.

We are further informed concerning “the tree of life” that its leaves will “be for the healing of the nations.” In another prophecy of “the river of life,” where it is shown flowing from the temple, or sanctuary of the Lord, we read, “On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.”—Ezek. 47:12, *RSV*

And how great will be the need of the nations for healing! This will be true of the people of all nations, not only those which exist now, but those who have suffered and died throughout the ages. As the life-giving reign of the kingdom begins the people of all nations will be, as it were, wounded and bleeding, and only the provision which the Lord has made will heal their wounds, and restore them to health and life. It is this that is pictured by the river of life and its tree of life which are provided “by the throne of God and of the Lamb.”

The Nations

Promises and prophecies of the Bible which give assurance of health and life in the kingdom are often misapplied to what it is believed conditions will be like in heaven. For example Revelation 21:4 assures us of a time when there shall be no more death, and when all tears will be wiped away. Many fail to note the expression “no more death,” which implies that this is a provision of the Lord for people on earth where for over six thousand years death has been constantly present.

So when we read that the “nations” will be healed we should remember that the sick nations exist, not in heaven, but here and that it is here on earth where these refreshing blessings of the river of life will flow out to the people. Nationalism will not exist in the kingdom, but all nationalities of earth will have an opportunity to receive the life-giving blessings of the river of life and its tree of life. This, indeed, is one of the beautiful, symbolic pictures of the fulfillment of that original promise which God made to father Abraham when he said to him that through his seed, which is The Christ, all the families, or nations of the earth shall be blessed.—Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:16,27-29

Abraham could not know when God made this promise to him that by the time it would be fulfilled the earth would be filled, and that the families of the earth would be scattered to inhabit all its continents and the isles of the sea. Indeed, it is doubtful if Abraham had much idea of the broad expanse of this beautiful earth, the earth which God proposes to transform into a paradise for the eternal joy of all the willing and obedient humans who, under the rulership of the messianic kingdom, will turn to him in obedience and faith, and thus be among that multitude who will be healed and who will have their tears wiped away.

The “Bride”

In verse 17 of this 22nd chapter of Revelation there is a further reference to the water of life. We quote, “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.” (*RSV*) Revelation 19:10 informs us that “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,” and it could well be that the reference to the Spirit and the bride saying “Come,” refers to Jesus and his “bride.”

In Revelation 19:7 we are told of the time when the marriage of the “Lamb” is come, and when “his wife hath made herself ready.” In Revelation 21:2 we have a reference to the “holy city coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” And in the 9th and 10th verses of this chapter the Apostle John writes, “And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.”

There is abundant testimony in the Scriptures to indicate that this prophetic “bride of the Lamb” will be composed of the complete number of Christ’s faithful followers from Pentecost to the full end of the Gospel Age. The expression, “hath made herself ready,” is an interesting one, and vital to every Christian who aspires to be of this special company of favored ones in the kingdom. It reminds us that those who will be of the bride class have yielded themselves to the molding influences of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and by this means have become like Christ, and suitable to be members of his bride class. Much suffering and many tests of faith have been involved in this; and as all have finished their preparation, having fully laid down their lives in sacrifice as Jesus did, following the raising of the last members in the “first resurrection” they will become united with him as his bride, in that great “holy city” arrangement of the future.

Here, then, is “the Spirit and the bride,” who in due time will say to the people of all nations, “Come, ... and take the water of life freely.” Many have mistakenly supposed that this invitation has been going out to the world ever since the first advent of Christ, but this could not be, because during all those centuries there has been no “bride” of Christ to say “Come,” for this age has been set aside in the plan of God as a period in which the bride makes herself ready.

This making ready of the bride will not be completed until the last member has finished his course in death. Then the marriage of the Lamb will take place. Then there will be a bride, and then the “Spirit and the bride will say, ‘Come.’” This is a bright prospect for the future. Not only will “the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come,’” but all who hear that blessed invitation will have the privilege of joining in the blessed work of extending this invitation until all the families of the earth are reached.

This will be the work of Christ’s millennial kingdom. Satan will then be bound, and no longer able to pollute men’s minds with all sorts of hallucinations concerning God. The one who has deceived all nations will no longer be permitted to deceive, and thus, forthwith, the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.—Rev. 20:12; Isa. 11:9

This is the divine remedy for all the problems which have been created by human sin and selfishness, including the problem posed by the hydrogen bomb, and the pollution of our environment which now threatens the very existence of the human race. And what a wonderful solution it is! When fully activated, it will lead to peace, happiness, and everlasting life among all nations, for the nations will be healed, and the refreshing waters of the river of life will restore the people to that God-provided heritage which, through sin, they lost awhile, but because of God’s love, will have been regained.

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