

God's Millennium

It is morning.

A new millennial day is dawning.

The forecast is bright for decades of unparalleled technological advances. The prospects are hopeful for an era of increased prosperity and a higher standard of living.

But foreboding clouds also loom on the horizon.

Turmoil encircles the earth as nation fights nation and tribe fights tribe in ugly ethnic battles that threaten genocide.

Drug traffic, teenage gangs, drive-by shootings, and high crime rates infect the inner cities. Scandals and corruption are rife in the highest citadels of power.

What does the new millennium hold? Man's predictions are, at best, confused. The scholars of our day are perplexed.

A Mixed Legacy

As the new millennium dawns, an old century fades away. It has left a mixed legacy.

- k The twentieth century opened with the Wright brothers making a flight of a few hundred feet. It closed with the earth being circled by jet aircraft, some going over the speed of sound.
- k It opened with the first automobile crossing the United States in 15 days. It closed with streets clogged with traffic and a world interlaced with super highways.
- k In 1906 the world heard its first radio broadcast. We enter the next millennium with thousands of stations joined by numerous television networks spanning the globe.
- k The century began with the telephone in its infancy. It closed with instantaneous communication through the computer with its World Wide Web.

- k As the century began, men were content to gaze at the moon; to-day, they have not only walked on it, but are building a way-station for travel to the outer planets and beyond.

As Charles Dickens summed up his day in *A Tale of Two Cities*: “It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.”

Sweeping World Changes

The twentieth century was a century of sweeping world changes:

- k World War I was a death knell for the hereditary ruling houses of Europe and the concept of the divine right of kings. As Barbara Tuchman phrased it in her *Guns of August*: “In 1914 a world came to an end.”
- k World War II with its mighty atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, raised the awesome specter of a world with the potential to destroy all human life.

- k While men of military brilliance have fought bravely, there have been villains, too—Adolf Hitler directing the genocidal Holocaust against the Jewish race and the people of Poland. Likewise were the “killing fields” of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge. Ethnic strife has savaged both land and life in Rwanda and the Balkans while religions clash in Northern Ireland and the nations of Islam have directed their wrath against Israel.
- k The Civil Rights movement behind the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr. in America, and Nelson Mandela, leading the fight against apartheid in South Africa, permanently challenged old concepts on the segregation of the races.
- k Scores of new nations claimed independent status behind such outstanding leaders as Mahatma Ghandi of India and David Ben Gurion of Israel.

- k Despite the strong leadership of Pope John Paul II, the laity in both the Catholic and Protestant churches asserted their independence from their church hierarchies.
- k The past century also saw a 70-year political and economic experiment with Communism fall along with its symbolic “Berlin Wall.”

The world will never be the same as that which entered the twentieth century.

Another Millennium

While the future that the incoming millennium holds mystifies the commentators of the world, there is another millennium also beginning to dawn. This is the Millennium referred to in the last book of the Bible when the followers of Jesus of Nazareth live and reign with him “*a thousand years.*” This Millennium includes various aspects—such as the “*kingdom of God*” (Luke 13:28)

and *“the times of restitution of all things.”*—Acts 3:19-21

There is no question as to the outcome of this Millennium.

It promises peace.

“They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”—Isaiah 2:4

It promises health.

“And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick.”—Isaiah 33:24

It promises happiness.

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”—Revelation 21:4

It promises life.

“Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the

children of the resurrection.”—Luke 20:36

It promises righteous judgment.

“He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”—Acts 17:31

It promises security.

“But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.”—Micah 4:4

It all sounds beautiful—almost too beautiful to be true.

How do we know it is so? What assurance can we have in these promises?

Notice again how Micah closes his prediction—*“For the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.”*

Is that enough? Many men make promises. Many men break promises.

There lies the difference. God makes promises. God does not break promises. God keeps promises.

Sometimes God's promises are in the form of judgments. Other times his promises are for blessings. Let's look at God's record.

- k Man was not on the earth for long before the human race became corrupted. God pronounced a sentence—he would destroy the race with a flood. God's sentence was carried out and only Noah and his family passed over into the new world order.
- k Years later God promised Abraham that he and his wife Sarah would have a child. Years passed. Nothing happened. His wife was well past the time of child bearing. Abraham was one hundred years old. He had a child. God kept his promise.
- k Still later God dealt with only one nation on earth—Israel.

“You only have I known of all the families of the earth.” (Amos 3:2) They became idolaters. He predicted that they would go into captivity in Babylon. God’s word was sure.

k Even before they were taken captive, God promised they would be released after 70 years. When the 70 years were up—that exact year—King Cyrus permitted them to return to Jerusalem. God kept his word.

k From the very fall of man—and frequently thereafter—God promised to raise up a seed from the race to redeem all men. This man they would call the Messiah. At the very time God predicted he would come, Jesus of Nazareth was born as that Messiah. God’s promise did not fail.

With such a record of fulfilled promises—and there are hundreds more—can we doubt that he will keep his promise of a kingdom of

peace? God's promises are sure. They can be relied on. There will be a millennial kingdom. God promised it and it will happen.

The Importance of Justice

Will that kingdom come just because God promised it? Yes! There is more. It is the just thing for God to do. The Bible proclaims that God is not only just, but because of that justice, he is *"the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."*—Romans 3:26

Justice enters in because where there is a just sentence there must be a just reason for the removal of that sentence. When Adam and Eve sinned by eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, there was but one penalty—death. *"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."* (Genesis 2:17) *"The wages of sin is death."*—Romans 6:23

Man sinned. Man must die. It was that simple. There could be no release unless someone paid that penalty for them.

That is exactly what happened. Jesus Christ died to remove the penalty of sin—death—from Adam and all his descendants. Listen to the Apostle Paul:

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”—Romans 5:12

“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”—1 Corinthians 15:21, 22

How many have died? Everyone! How many will live again? Everyone! Good and bad. Believer and unbeliever. Jew and Gentile. Everyone!

Jesus directly predicted the same: *“...the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.”— John 5:28, 29 RSV*

Heaven and Earth

Notice that there are two resurrections:

- k A resurrection of life for those who have done good, and
- k resurrection of judgment for those who have done evil.

These two resurrections are the fulfillment of another of God's promises—a promise made to Abraham over 4,000 years ago...

“And [God] said, By myself have I sworn,...That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”—Genesis 22:16-18

Notice the two parts of the promised “seed” of Abraham.. .

- k “as the stars of the heaven,” and

k *“as the sand which is upon the sea shore.”*

Stars are found in heaven. Sand is found on the earth. This implies that Abraham’s seed would have one part in heaven and one part on earth.

From the time of Abraham to the time of Jesus, God dealt exclusively with the nation of Israel. They were his people. God said to them, *“I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.”*—Leviticus 26:12

When that nation refused to accept Jesus as their Messiah, he wept over the city and said: *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”*—Matthew 23:37, 38

But that desolation was not to be permanent. The prophet Hosea prophesied, *“Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.”*—Hosea 1:10

Their work, as the seed of Abraham, is given in Isaiah 2:2-4, *“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations,*

and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

The word of the LORD shall go forth from Jerusalem. Jerusalem, the ancient capital of Israel, will then be the capital of the world. And peace shall reign—swords shall become plowshares, spears shall become pruninghooks. What a blessing that will be!

Israel is the natural seed of Abraham.

There is more. Abraham was to have another seed which would be as "*the stars of heaven.*" This seed is clearly identified by the Apostle Paul.

"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."—Galatians 3:16

Then he adds... *“And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*—vs. 29

The “ye” he is talking of are the followers of Christ—Christians. These, with their Master, are peculiarly *“the seed of Abraham.”*

These, Paul says, are *“partakers of the heavenly calling.”*
(Hebrews 3:1)

These shall *“reign with him.”*
(2 Timothy 2:12)

These shall *“see him as he is”*
for they shall *“be like him.”* (1 John 3:2)

These are his *“Bride.”*
(Revelation 21:9)

These, then, are the seed
of Abraham that are as
“the stars of heaven.”

Bless All Nations

The seed of Abraham was to bless all the nations of the earth, and this will be fulfilled when as a

part of the first resurrection, the Church shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with him a thousand years.—Revelation 20:6

A thousand years! That's the Millennium. That's God's Millennium, not man's millennium.

They will not only bless a few families of the earth. They will bless **ALL** the families of the earth.

They will bless the wicked nations of Sodom and Gomorrah. (Ezekiel 16:55)

They will bless the pagan nations.

They will bless the nation of Israel.

They will bless the atheistic nations.

They will bless the Christian nations.

They will bless the Muslim nations.

They will bless "*all the nations of the earth.*"

It is this universal scope of God's plan which makes it so wonderful.

What greater proof do we need that "*God is love!*"

What will that kingdom do?

Why does it take an entire Millennium to accomplish it?

Consider the work that has to be done.

Present corrupt society must be removed.

The construction of any new building on the site of an earlier structure demands its removal. This does not mean the destruction of everything that is on earth.

The Kingdom of God is being set up while other kingdoms are in existence.

“And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.”—Daniel 2:44 NAS

Revelation 16:18-21 uses symbolic language of lightning (enlightenment), earthquakes (revolutions), and hail (hard water—hard truths) which are all used by the LORD to

destroy the present evil order. These are the tools used today to weaken governments, fuel discontent and topple empires. Those that have the most to lose blaspheme God as they see their eminent loss, yet the oppressed rejoice at the transitions which bring hope to a new era.

The Apostle Peter looked forward to our day and the events which we see.

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief. . . (few would recognize Christ as the cause of the trouble) in which the heavens (the spiritual realm of Satan and his hosts) will pass away with a roar (he does not give up without a fight) and the elements (Satan’s agencies) will be destroyed with intense heat (destruction through trouble) and the earth (society) and its works (corruptions) will be burned up (figuratively destroyed).

“But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens (the new spiritual government of our

Lord) *and a new earth (society) in which righteousness dwells.*”—
2 Peter 3:10, 13 NAS

It is the governmental systems and the organizations that control the religious and economic structures of this world we live in that will be replaced. Their judgment is the same as the handwriting that was on the wall of ancient Babylon: *“Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.”*—Daniel 5:27

The Bible indicates that there will be much destruction in the final battles of this old order which the Scriptures refer to as Armageddon. However, it also indicates that there will be many people who will live on into God’s Kingdom.

“Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’s anger.”—
Zephaniah 2:3

A foundation must be laid for the new order.

Preparations for this have already begun with the return of God's ancient people of Israel to their ancestral homeland. The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah have much to say about this restoration of Israel. Listen, as the LORD says of Israel, *"I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities. I will restore your judges as in days of old, your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you will be called the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City."* —Isaiah 1:25, 26
NIV

Evil must be restrained.

With a new governmental structure in place, the tempting influences of evil must be restrained. It was these influences which introduced sin in the first place. If left to exert their seducing lures, man would soon fall back into evil ways. But these forces will be removed before the world will realize full peace.

“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”—Revelation 20:1-3

The dead must return to life.

The Apostle Paul writes, *“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”*-1 Corinthians 15:22

Then even the wicked will come back to life. *“Yes, your sisters, Sodom and Samaria, and all their people will be restored, and at that time, you also will be restored.”—Ezekiel 16:55 NLT*

Paul speaks of this same hope in Acts 24:14, 15 (NIV): *“I admit that I*

worship the God of our fathers . . . I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.”

A covenant must be put in place between God and man.

Those who would enjoy the blessings of that kingdom must agree to the terms of that new and righteous government. They will make a covenant with God. It will be a new covenant, made initially with Israel and then spreading out to all nations. *“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the*

covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”—Jeremiah 31:31-34

This covenant will provide for a mediator to stand between God and man so that the judgments of the Almighty do not condemn man as soon as he falls short, *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”—1 Timothy 2:5*

The risen dead must be educated.

Man will come back from the grave with the same memory and thoughts he had when he went into the grave. The effects of selfishness will not be immediately obliterated. The laws of righteousness must be taught and the benefits of keeping them learned. *“When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.”—Isaiah 26:9*

One of the beautiful pictures of this educational process is found in the book of Isaiah. There it is described as a highway that leads to holiness. Listen to the prophet's words:

“And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”—Isaiah 35:8-10

That educational program will be so complete that all will hear its message. One may begin the highway as a nonbeliever, but they will be believers by its end. The way will be so clear that those who tread that road, though fools, shall not err therein.

How complete will that schooling be? Hear the word of the LORD, *“And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”*—Jeremiah 31:34

“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.”—Isaiah 11:9

There will be a final test.

Once man has reached perfection a final test will be applied to see if his obedience is truly willing. This test is described in the book of Revelation.

“And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the

four quarters of the earth.”—Revelation 20:7-9

The vast majority of mankind will accept the kingdom arrangements and go on to live forever. But there will be some who will not respond to the influences of God's Kingdom and will fail the final test. They will die what the Revelator terms "*the second death*" or total extinction from which there shall be no resurrection.

When thus the kingdom work is complete, what rejoicing there will be. Man will realize his full potential. Each will love his neighbor. The rights of everyone will be exercised depending on their recognition of all others. Harmony will exist between man and animals. All pain, all sickness, all disease shall be removed. There will be no more death. Earth, too, will achieve perfection. No weeds nor noxious plants shall impede the growth of plants. The deserts will blossom as the rose. People will not fear

such calamities as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tornadoes, hurricanes, nor floods.

Then man will know the answer to the age-old question, "Why does a God of love permit evil?"

Man's present life is full of trouble. He has seen firsthand the results of a life of disobedience. More than that, he has experienced them personally. In God's Millennial Kingdom he will see the results of doing good. He will learn those lessons personally.

Disobedience has brought its results of selfishness, disease, tension, war, and death. Obedience will bring its results of unselfishness, health, repose, peace, and life. With such a contrast before them, is it any wonder what they will choose? They will choose obedience that they might live.

In the words of the Psalmist, they will say, "*It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.*"—Psalms 119:71

"This sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith."—Ecclesiastes 1:13

When will the Kingdom come?

With such a prospect before us, we can only cry out, "When, when, O LORD. When will that kingdom come." We have prayed earnestly for it, *"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is done in heaven."* (Matthew 6:10) With yearning hearts we want to know how long must we wait and what will be the signs of its coming.

The Bible abounds in signs that show its nearness. Even today they are all about us. We see the nations crumbling on every side. We see Israel returned to their land. We see evil having come to its full. We see signs in the social struggles of our day. We see evidences in Christianity. We see its approach in the fear and perplexity of the commentators of our day.

Yes, a new day is dawning. A millennial day is on the horizon—

not the millennium of man—but the grand Millennial Kingdom of God, not much further off. Let us eagerly watch the signs of its approach. To-day we see many signs being confirmed. Let us continue earnest prayers for God's Kingdom and for its king, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is preparing to take control of the affairs of men.

It is the promise of the Bible! It is a time of health—when the lame walk, the blind see, and the deaf hear. It is a time of peace—when weapons of war are turned into tools of growth. It is a time of security—when theft and mayhem are all done away. It is a time of life—with cemeteries and mortuaries a thing of the past. It is a time of joy—when happiness reigns supreme.

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