

WORLD
CONDITIONS
AND
THE
END
OF
THE
AGE

by
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PREFACE

The state of the world today has aroused a great deal of interest in future events, with the result that many have expressed the desire that something should be written on the subject.

To go into the matter fully would involve the reader in a mass of detail that would require a large and expensive book, which would defeat the object of trying to make the subject as clear as possible.

The author has therefore set out the broad plan only of future events as revealed in the Scriptures, with the hope that this will provide the reader with the groundwork upon which he can build; filling in the details for himself by subsequent reading and study of the Scriptures. In the words of the Apostle Peter, it is a light which pierces the darkness ahead.

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your heart”
(2 Pet.1:19).

WORLD CONDITIONS AND THE END OF THE AGE

There is no doubt whatsoever that present world conditions are causing a great deal of uncertainty, anxiety and unrest. Wherever we turn the problems mount and seem insoluble. Lasting peace and stability have vanished and it matters not whether we look at the state of the world, the state of our nation or our own personal problems, life is getting more and more difficult as the days pass. It is not to be wondered at that many are bewildered and have come to the conclusion that the only thing to do is to live for the present and try to forget the future. Unfortunately this is like the ostrich putting its head in the sand. It solves nothing and pressing problems are not resolved by ignoring them.

Gross materialism, greed and lust for power rear their ugly heads everywhere. Governments do little more than set before the people the hope of "raising the standard of living" as though this, when achieved, will end all the difficulties and bring in a millennium of peace and plenty. Surely it should be obvious that the troubles that afflict us do not spring from outward conditions alone, but result from the condition of *men's minds*. If only these could be controlled, and selfishness and greed replaced by lasting unselfishness and genuine concern for others, the whole world situation could be transformed.

But some will say that this is impossible, so where do we go from here? To whom or to what can we turn? Could it be that the Bible, the Book of God, contains the solution? While the Scriptures are largely disregarded today, the person who thinks seriously would do well to turn to its pages and seek to discover what God says about the future, and whether there is any real hope of surmounting and banishing the colossal problems that beset us.

This concerns what theologians call *eschatology* or the doctrine of the “last things”, and brings us into the realm of Biblical prophecy. This is a great subject and one that is not by any means easy to grasp in all its aspects. However, the apostle Peter makes an important statement concerning prophecy:

“We have also a more sure word of *prophecy*; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Pet.1:19).

Prophecy has not been given to turn us into second-rate prophets. God’s prophetic Word is a searchlight that pierces the darkness ahead and enables the one who takes heed to it to walk in the light with certainty and without stumbling. Only God knows the future and it is utterly futile to turn to the works of men to get sure and certain direction as to things to come.

Again prophecy has not been written for the curious, for, let us face it, knowledge of future events holds an attraction for all of us. This is one of the reasons why much of it is written in symbolic language which is sometimes difficult to understand. Prophecy is guidance for the people of God, not for those who reject Christ and have no time for the things of God. We have the encouragement of the fact that the Holy Spirit can give us understanding on the prophetic portions of His Word as much as any other part of it. “The wise shall understand” (Dan.12:10) and those who are described as wise will be prepared to search the prophetic Scriptures and compare them, and wait upon God for such illumination and understanding as is needed if one is to get a clear picture of what lies ahead.

We would point out that while the O.T. prophets deal in some measure with the wind-up of this age, the main prophetic parts of the Bible are the prophecy of Daniel, and in the

N.T., the book of Revelation*. These should be kept together for one is a commentary on the other.

It is not possible to give a detailed exposition of these parts of Scripture, which would need a large volume. However, we will endeavour to give the broad outlines of the future as indicated in the Word of God.

Those who are members of the Church which is Christ's Body have a sure and certain hope which they daily wait for:

“For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us ... to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for Himself a people of His own who are zealous for good deeds” (Titus 2:11-14 R.S.V.).

There is no prophetic event mentioned in the prison epistles of Paul which must take place before this wonderful hope is realized, so it should be a daily expectation. We cannot date it, but it will surely come to pass when the Lord has saved and gathered in the last member of the Body, and then the completed company will be taken to the glory of heavenly places “far above all”, where Christ is now enthroned (Eph. 1:16-23; 2:4-9). Those who have died will be raised from the dead with a “body fashioned like the body of His glory” (Phil.3:20,21) and the living changed into the same Image.

The way will then be clear for God to take up again His earthly people, the nation of Israel, though His providential care has watched over them even in their “lo-ammi” or rejected condition all down this age. Spiritual blindness came upon this nation because of their continued rejection of

* Among the many books which deal with Daniel and Revelation we can recommend *The Histories and Prophecies of Daniel* by G. H. Lang (Paternoster Press), also the paperback entitled *Daniel* by Geoffrey R. King and published by Henry E. Walter Ltd., and for the book of Revelation, *This Prophecy* by C. H. Welch published by The Berean Publishing Trust. Some will disagree with certain points of interpretation, but we may say that it would need an angel to write a book on prophecy that would command the assent of all professing Christians!

Christ both in His earthly ministry and the offer of restoration given to them in Acts 3:19-26. But Romans 11 has instructed us that this is for a limited period, for the gifts and calling of God are without change of mind (repentance) on His part (Rom.11:29). It will be ended by the Second Coming of Christ to the earth (to Palestine) and then Israel will “look on Him Whom they have pierced”, and be saved and converted at last (Rom.11:25-36; Zech.12:9-14).

What do the Scriptures teach us about the end of this age? They give us a very detailed and graphic description, but we have to face the fact that the end time condition for the world as a whole is as *black as it can be*. Not one passage of Scripture in the O.T. or N.T. describes this time as one of peace, blessing or stability, rather the reverse. The reader should carefully peruse Matthew 24 here, for in this chapter the Lord Jesus almost stunned the disciples by telling them that the magnificent Temple at Jerusalem would be razed to the ground, and this took place at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70. The amazed disciples asked Him when this would take place. They linked it with His Second Coming and further enquired what would be the sign of His Second Coming and the *end of the age*.

Here our A.V. is misleading, for it translates their question as asking concerning the *end of the world*. The cessation of the present earth was not in their minds. Far better here is the N.E.B. or R.S.V. which reads:

“Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the *close of the age*?” (Matt.24:3 R.S.V.).

So many people today, if they ever think about these things at all, put the Second Coming of Christ at the last day, the end of time — possibly thousands of years ahead. Many creeds do this too, in which case this great event has no practical bearing on our present lives or the situation in which we find ourselves. Just the reverse is true as the N.T. makes clear. Note that the Lord Jesus answers the disciples three-fold question *in reverse order*. He deals with the end of the age in

verses 4-24; the sign of His Coming in verses 25-31 and answers the query when? in verses 32-42.

One thing must not be missed – the Lord's stress on *deception* in verses 4,5,11, and 24. Many are going to be deceived He forewarns, and to deceive a large number of people the lie must look very much like the truth or it will have little effect. This can hardly be over-stressed. The great deceiver himself, Satan, will spread his lie all over the world through his dupes. The Apostle Paul emphasizes this in 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10, and John in Revelation 13:11-14. The whole of 2 Thessalonians 1 and 2 should be carefully pondered, for these passages deal with the end time and the Lord's Coming.

The characteristics of the world as a whole are startlingly portrayed by Paul in his last epistle:

“Men will love nothing but money and self; they will be arrogant, boastful, and abusive; with no respect for parents, no gratitude, no piety, no natural affection; they will be implacable in their hatreds, scandalmongers, intemperate and fierce, strangers to all goodness, traitors, adventurers, swollen with self-importance. They will be men who put pleasure in the place of God, men who preserve the outward form of religion, but are a standing denial of its reality. Keep clear of men like these” (2 Tim.3:2-5 N.E.B.).

Not a very nice picture is it? But absolutely true of the world we are living in today. “They will love nothing but money and self”. Man, ever prone to idolatry when he turns away from God, avidly worships the great god Materialism and this is what we are seeing all around us. The value of life seems to be couched in nothing more than money and material possessions. But this never satisfies, for this god binds its devotees in a greater bondage from month to month and year to year and so they struggle violently to get more and more. At the same time, true contentment, like the will o' the wisp, eludes them.

“Lawlessness will abound” said the Lord Jesus (Matt.24: 12) and He likened these days to the times of Noah (verse 37). Genesis 6 should be consulted here. In verse 13 God declares that the earth was *full of violence* and that the end of

mankind had come. How relevant this is to the times in which we live! There is less and less respect for law and order, violence and crime are increasing on an alarming scale the world over. Our prisons are full and over-crowded. Men are *refusing to be controlled*, and this can only finally lead to anarchy and self-destruction, for self-control has largely vanished.

The Lord further added that the end time would be a *climax time* of trouble “such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt.24:21), and He goes on to assert that unless this time is shortened it would end in the complete destruction of mankind (verse 22). Bear in mind these words were uttered by One Who said:

“I am the way, THE TRUTH, and the life” (John 14:6),

so this cannot be exaggeration, but a sober and terrible picture of the nightmare towards which the world is rapidly drifting through its rejection of God and His standards. Whatever anyone wants to do is now considered right no matter how low and despicable it is. All this will lead to *the greatest crisis of the world's history*.

It used to be taught that Christ would not return to the earth until the gospel had been preached all over the world and had been accepted by all. In other words Christ could not and would not return till mankind was ready to receive Him. *But just the opposite is true*. It is at the climax of the world's sin and the terrible dangers that it produces, that Christ will appear personally in power and great glory as He promised (Matt.24:30), to cut it all short. Whereupon He takes control of world affairs and brings in His Kingdom of righteousness so that all will have to conform to Him and His will.

First of all He will have to rule with a rod of iron, that is, with firmness, until the nations learn what God's truth really is and start to put it into practice. The Lord will then have dominion from “sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth” (Psa.72:8; Zech.14:9), for the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His

Christ, and He will reign for ever and ever (Rev.11:15).

Then, at last, armaments and all weapons of destruction will be abolished and nations will not learn war any more (Micah 4:3). This will last for 1,000 years (Rev.20:4), hence the term 'Millennium' which means a thousand. Think of the tremendous financial burden that will then be removed with no more money needed for armaments! It will be a blessed time of peace and security when Satan and sin will be restrained (Rev.20:1-3) so that the nations cannot be deceived, and it will be characterized by increased fruitfulness of the earth (Isa.30:23) and lengthened life (Isa.65:20). After the 1,000 years are finished, the ages complete their course and God creates a new earth and heaven which are as perfect and spotless as the first creation before sin entered, and these spheres are then peopled with His redeemed children. Thus the goal of the ages is at last reached and this is as far as divine revelation takes us.

But coming back to the condition of the end time of this age we should realize that there is no human solution to the terrible mess that man has made for himself. He will have his conferences and make his pacts and treaties, but all will finally break down into absolute chaos, darkness and hopelessness.

The centre of excessively troubled times at the end of the age is the nation of Israel and the controversy and feud between Jew and Arab concerning the land of Palestine. The Middle East problem will doubtless persist from now onwards and there will be no lasting peace in that region until Christ returns, Who alone can deal with it satisfactorily and righteously, and this will be along the lines of His earthly purpose that is made clear in the Old and New Testaments.

A bare outline of the prophetic events to come is as follows, though, as we stated earlier on, we cannot fully expound the Scriptural passages dealing with these events as this would demand a large volume. There will be a federation of ten kingdoms at the end (symbolized by the ten toes of

Nebuchadnezzar's image in Daniel 2). Whether the Common Market will develop into this or whether it is a confederation of nations surrounding Palestine it is not yet clear.

Certain it is that the land of Israel is the geographical centre of all these prophecies and the points of the compass referred to have relation to Palestine and nowhere else.

The next development is the arrival on the scene of a being that Daniel describes as a "little horn" (Dan.7:8,24,25), that is to say he is insignificant and unknown at first, but rapidly comes to the fore and subdues three of the ten powers and then takes control. He then becomes the great world dictator of the end time and will be the greatest tyrant the world has ever seen. Much is said in prophecy about him, but the tremendous power that he wields is satanic for Satan gives him "his power and his throne and great authority" (Rev.13:2). He is, as it were, Satan's trump card, his final fling and attempt to defeat God and get complete control and the worship of all mankind, and he nearly succeeds! (Read Rev.13:3,4,8).

Never forget that, as we have before stressed, Satan is a *religious being*, and in his pride wants nothing less than the place of God and the worship of creation. It was this that caused his fall and this has been the centre of the spiritual warfare that has been going on ever since. He offered the kingdoms of the world to the Lord Jesus on one condition — that He would fall down and worship him! (Matt.4:8-10). What Christ would not give him, he finally gets in a large measure through his man, the great dictator of the end of this age.

This tyrant finally gets world dominion, so much so that he can control the air as well as the earth for Satan, the *prince of the power of the air* (Eph.2:2) has given him this ability (Rev.13:2,7). Consequently everyone says that at last peace has come, for "who can make war with him?" (Rev.13:4). But this will be short-lived for 1 Thessalonians 5:2,3 tells us that when they shall say, "peace and safety; then sudden

destruction comes upon them” and this is nothing less than the glorious appearing of Christ in His triumphant journey back to the earth which will be sudden, like lightning and without warning (Matt.24:27-30; 2 Thess.1:7-10), a tremendous shock to godless mankind.

The world dictator, whom the Bible symbolically likens to a wild beast, will finally have such control over mankind that his will becomes paramount and all who refuse to obey it will be murdered or starved to death (Rev.13:11-18). Who can doubt that the present state of the business world and the world as a whole, with its mergers and concentration of power into fewer and fewer hands, and the spread of atheistic communism and totalitarianism is setting the stage for this greatest of all take-overs?

The book of Daniel, chapter nine, gives the revelation of a period of time, consequent upon Daniel’s prayer, of 70 sevens of years relating to Israel and Jerusalem, dating from the “going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem” (after the judgment of the 70 years captivity in Babylon) to the putting away of Israel’s sins and the setting up of the earthly kingdom by the Lord.

It is obvious that the present age of grace is excluded for Israel are in unbelief and spiritual blindness all this time — “not My people” as God describes their condition (Acts 28: 24-27). The interest is focused on the last week* of seven years which is as yet unfulfilled and will be the final years of this age. This seven year period is divided into half by such cryptic statements as “a time, times, and a half” (Dan.12:7; Rev.12:14); “A time and times and the dividing of time” (Dan.7:25); “1260 days” (Rev.12:6); “42 months” (Rev. 11:2, using the Jewish reckoning of 30 days to a month). All these expressions mean a period of 3½ years. Daniel reveals the fact that one of the first things the great tyrant will do is to make a pact with the Jews. This act will be the beginning of this last period of seven years. Half-way through

* Note that the Jew can as easily talk about a week of years as a week of days.

it (after 3½ years) he breaks this covenant (Dan.9:27) and causes an image of himself to be set up for veneration. This is what the Lord Jesus referred to in Matthew 24 when He spoke of “the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place” (of the restored temple) (Matt.24:15-22). This is the signal for the beginning of “the great tribulation”, that unparalleled time of world terror and calamity which the Lord declared was unique in history. Nothing has ever been like it before, nor will it ever be repeated (Matt.24:21,22), and if God did not step in and shorten the time it would lead to universal annihilation. Those who see this are warned to escape to the mountains as speedily as possible, not even stopping to take their possessions.

Daniel likewise describes this terrible time:

“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince (the archangel) which standeth for the children of thy people (Israel): and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people (Israel) shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book” (Dan.12:1).

Israel and the Middle East is the centre of it all. It is pre-eminently a “time of *Jacob's* trouble” i.e. the Jewish nation (Jer.30:7), although the whole world is involved and a last desperate effort is made by the nations combining together to rid themselves once for all of the Jewish problem by seeking to exterminate Israel for ever. The prophetic Scriptures reveal that this takes place at “Armageddon” or “Harmagedon” (the hill of Megiddo). Megiddo is situated in Palestine. It was important in the Old Testament and is found in the Carmel range some 20 miles S.S.E. of the modern port of Haifa (Judges 5:19; 2 Kings 23:29; 2 Chron.35:22-25; Zech. 12:11). It is here that the last and most terrible world battle will be fought (see Rev.16:13-16; 19:11-21; Zech.12:1-9; 14:1-7, 12-16). But this time God takes a hand in it, for the Lord Jesus comes back to save His earthly people from destruction and to take vengeance on their enemies. Jerusalem will again be destroyed. This will be the 28th siege of this city! History already records 27 other occasions. Two thirds

of Israel will be massacred, a third part being preserved by God (Zech.13:8,9) and the slaughter of the nations will be terrible indeed (see Zech.14:12), and note the expression in verse 16 “everyone *that is left* of all the nations which came against Jerusalem”. The passages previously quoted in the book of Revelation – specially chapter 19, also graphically describe this fearful slaughter. The problem of world population will be solved in a very different way than men think.

As we have before indicated, these awful happenings, like some hideous nightmare (but alas it will be true), will be ended by nothing less than the personal return of Christ Himself Who will save His people Israel from destruction and destroy the Gentile armies which have invaded Palestine with the express intention of annihilating the Jew.

Then this age comes to its close. A terrible drama indeed and some will doubtless shake their heads and say “impossible”. But truth is sometimes stranger than fiction and it certainly is so here. This is what God’s searchlight, the Word of prophecy, reveals about the future, so that His people may be forewarned and not walk in darkness and uncertainty or be misled into following and worshipping the final great world-dictator. Those who remain faithful will do so at tremendous cost – even to giving their own lives. No wonder the Lord gives the message in Revelation 2:10 – “be thou faithful *unto death*, and I will give thee *a crown* of life”.

What an end to human civilisation and man’s so-called progress! We are supposed to be evolving to better things and many still think that man can not only work out his own salvation, but also the salvation of the world and bring in the Utopia for which men have always longed. This is sheer deception and the Word of God faithfully shows what finally happens when men reject God, His Truth and His standards.

To this fearful goal the world is hastening and we need to take the blinkers off our eyes and realize how quickly things are moving downwards on a world scale. The signs all around us; the insoluble Middle East problem with Israel and the

Arabs; the world monetary problems; the growing might of the Communist countries; the utter inability of democracy to meet these conditions; the terrible slide in moral values and human conduct, the materialism and greed, selfishness and lack of self-control; the vandalism and personal danger on every hand (and all these things are world-wide), clearly show us that we are going rapidly towards the unparalleled time of danger and difficulty that the Lord Jesus described.

What should be the attitude of the believer? This should be very clear. It is to let the light of God's truth shine through us in thought, word and action, and to give a faithful testimony to a pagan world which, for the most part, has rejected God and His standards. We have the privilege of walking in the light of God's Word of Truth. All else is in blackness and uncertainty and there is no middle course, nor can there be any "sitting on the fence" if we want to be practical Christians, bringing honour to the Lord and being owned and blessed by Him.

With such momentous happenings facing us, we should seriously consider where we stand in relation to all this, and turn to the Holy Scriptures "which are able to make us wise unto salvation *through faith which is in Christ Jesus*" (2 Tim. 3:15-17). This is where we must all start, coming to a personal knowledge of Him as our own Saviour and Lord as we completely trust Him for time and for eternity. Millions yet have not realized all that He has accomplished on the cross and in resurrection, and at what tremendous cost to Himself! What should we think of someone who had given their life to rescue another person from danger, and that person had not even bothered to say 'thank you' or to feel a spark of gratitude? Before we condemn such conduct as base thoughtlessness and ingratitude let us be sure that we have not been guilty of this very thing ourselves.

Christ has "once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet.3:18). "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree ..." (1 Pet.2:24). "In due time, Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom.5:6,

and whether we like it or not, this is a true description of all of us).

But have we ever thanked Him for this from the heart? If not, let not this day pass before we do this in reality and come to a personal knowledge of salvation and forgiveness of our sins for:

“*Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation*”
(2 Cor.6:2),

and this day of opportunity should be grasped without delay, for it has an end and that end may be nearer than people think.

For the believer in Christ the climax of truth is found in Paul’s prison epistles, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and 2 Timothy. Untold wonders await the child of God who will humbly ask the Lord for the “spirit of revelation” (Eph.1:17,18) and who will diligently search these epistles and *fully believe what is written*. Israel of old missed God’s best through *unbelief*. “They could not enter in (the promised land) because of *unbelief*” (Heb.3:19), and it will be this parent sin which will rob the believer of God’s best in the present age of grace. God is waiting to reveal “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph.3:8). Are we ready to receive them? One is amazed that so many Christians are content with so little truth, when there is vast spiritual wealth awaiting the appropriation of faith!

The last thought we want to leave with the reader is that *He Who is God manifest in human form, is the key to all our problems, personal, national, and world-wide*. No wonder, with the burdens of the world in mind, almost the last words recorded in the Scriptures of truth are:

“Surely I come quickly. Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus”
(Rev.22:20).

Let us therefore live:

“... Awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for Himself a people of His own who are zealous for good deeds” (Titus 2:11-15 R.S.V.).

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