

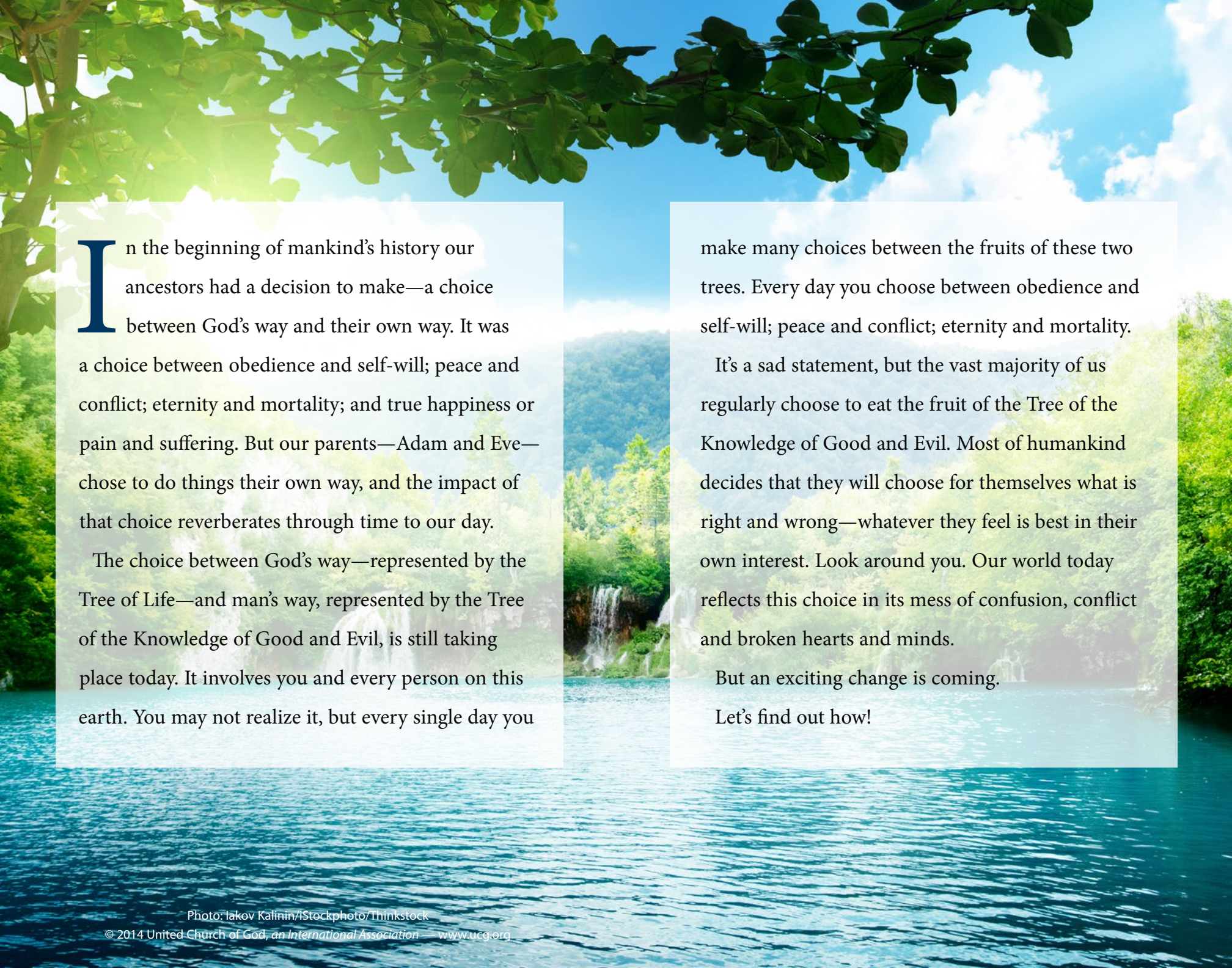
Christ's Reign on Earth

What It Will Be Like



BEYOND
TODAY

A Bible study aid presented
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In the beginning of mankind's history our ancestors had a decision to make—a choice between God's way and their own way. It was a choice between obedience and self-will; peace and conflict; eternity and mortality; and true happiness or pain and suffering. But our parents—Adam and Eve—chose to do things their own way, and the impact of that choice reverberates through time to our day.

The choice between God's way—represented by the Tree of Life—and man's way, represented by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, is still taking place today. It involves you and every person on this earth. You may not realize it, but every single day you

make many choices between the fruits of these two trees. Every day you choose between obedience and self-will; peace and conflict; eternity and mortality.

It's a sad statement, but the vast majority of us regularly choose to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Most of humankind decides that they will choose for themselves what is right and wrong—whatever they feel is best in their own interest. Look around you. Our world today reflects this choice in its mess of confusion, conflict and broken hearts and minds.

But an exciting change is coming.

Let's find out how!

The fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

It's not hard to see how mankind's choice has affected our world. Consider this description of our time that comes from a perspective beyond the human sphere:

"In the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power" (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

The apostle Paul, thousands of years in advance, nailed this list of many of the causes of humanity's ills. God's

Spirit showed clearly the things we are doing that are making our world more dangerous by the minute.

"No one would survive"

Jesus' disciples knew even then that the world was getting worse and worse, and would finally reach a point where these and other evils would crescendo to a final climax. Jesus told them He would return to begin a new age of peace. So they asked Him, "When will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the

end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3, New International Version).

Jesus' answer was breathtaking in its scope, but one phrase caught their ears. "For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world till now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, *no one would survive*, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:21-22, NIV, emphasis added).

The future of humanity is at stake! Jesus Christ identified the time of His return as a time when human extinction was possible. But He promised He wouldn't let that happen! The good news is that, before we can destroy ourselves, the story will change.

His feet will stand...

Jesus Christ will literally return to this earth—to the highly contested piece of real estate we know as Jerusalem! In the same way the disciples saw Christ ascend into the clouds after His resurrection, He will return through the clouds to this earth, but this time with power and great glory (Acts 1:11; Matthew 24:30).

That's the biggest news story in history, especially since if He did not come, humanity would destroy itself. Humankind continues to find more ways to obliterate every man, woman and child off the face of the earth.

Biblical prophecy describes in detail the time of great distress, or tribulation, that will envelope the earth. Wars, disasters, famines and disease epidemics will decimate the population.

Finally, when the nations of the world gather for battle at a place called Armageddon (Revelation:16:14, 16), Christ will swiftly intervene before it

is too late. Sadly, the nations will not recognize or welcome their Savior, but will fight Him.

"Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east" (Zechariah 14:3-4).

The battle will be over swiftly, ending the painful age of human misrule. Finally a new day will dawn—a day fresh with the promise of peace and fulfillment, of joy and purpose, of happiness and accomplishment. The nightmares of history will fade, and the dreams of mankind will begin to come to life.

The time after Christ's return will be wonderful beyond imagination! No wonder Christians have always prayed, "Your Kingdom come!" At the end of the book of Revelation, Jesus Christ tells us, "Surely I am coming quickly." And we fervently respond with the apostle John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20).

For more information, download or request your free copies of *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* and *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*.

Learn More

The book of Revelation is full of symbolism of what will happen in the future. Download or request our free study aid *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* to get some help understanding what that symbolism means, where the world is headed and why.



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A dream come true

Jesus Christ promised to return and not simply *clean up* the corruption of ongoing earthly rule, but *completely replace* all temporal entities with a completely new and perfect government—one that truly serves the people.

This is more than “day one” after an election or a coup, but a completely astounding “out of this world” intervention by the Kingdom of heaven—now brought to this earth and imposed on a desperate population in need of relief from its own human nature. In other words, man is going to be saved

from himself, by none other than his Creator. Are you ready?

The apostle John foresaw the time when the returning Christ will destroy those who destroy the earth (Revelation 11:18). He heard a loud announcement of the best news this troubled world could hear: “The king-

dom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (verse 15, English Standard Version).

This begins the time of refreshing, the time of restoration that the apostle Peter and all the holy prophets had proclaimed (Acts 3:19-21). It was not to be a restoration of some idyllic golden age of man, but a restoration of the perfect government of God that had been lost when man rejected Him in the Garden of Eden.

Real civil service

What will make God’s government different from all that have gone before? Christ described the contrast in a gentle rebuke to His own students, who had been themselves vying for power.

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles [the nations of the world] lord it over them, and those who are great

With the power and love of the Creator behind them, these resurrected servants of God will be able to clean up the corruption and cut through the Gordian knots that have had humanity in a stranglehold.

exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28).

Jesus Christ led the way. He gave up all the power of the universe to come live as a humble carpenter and teacher (Philippians 2:5-8). He never

took advantage of others, but freely let everyone take advantage of what He had to offer. He looked out for the poor, hungry, sick and disabled. He took the role of a slave and washed His disciples’ feet, and took the role of a martyr willing to die in our place (John 13:12-15; Romans 5:6-8).

This is certainly not to say that God’s government will not exercise power when necessary to prevent people from harming each other. But the difference will be that all decisions will be based on just laws that are for the real benefit of those governed (Psalm 119:172; Deuteronomy 6:24).

Love is the underlying foundation of all God’s laws (Matthew 22:37-40), and these good and fair laws will be administered by perfect leaders and judges who have learned to apply justice with mercy (Matthew 12:7; 18:23-35; 23:23).

Perfect leaders

In the human realm, even the best leaders are too often stymied by red tape, corrupt bureaucracies and humanly insolvable problems.

And sadly, too many of them also get trapped in the web of corruption and scandal.

But God has been working with people today to form in them His own righteous character so that He can make them incorruptible in every way at Christ’s return. Those who have been faithful, some even to death as martyrs, will be changed or “raised incorruptible,” with godly power and immortality (1 Corinthians 15:50-53).

Christ promised His people: “To him



who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Revelation 3:21). They will assist Him in fairly, mercifully and effectively serving those who survive the catastrophes of the end of man’s age of rulership.

With the power and love of the Creator behind them, these resurrected servants of God will be able to clean up the corruption and cut through the Gordian knots that have had humanity in a stranglehold.

Who will rule with Christ in His Kingdom? The Bible actually mentions a few people with their specific job assignments in God’s future government.

For example, in Ezekiel 34 God compared His nation of Israel to a flock of sheep. (This includes both the people of Judah and the northern 10 tribes that had previously gone into captivity and become lost in history. See the booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* for more about this fascinating part of the story.)

During this time of man’s misrule,

the people of Israel have been mistreated by their “shepherds” and been preyed upon by those around. But God promises to save them at Christ’s return. “I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—My servant David” (verse 23). King David will be resurrected and will again serve as king of the whole nation of Israel (Jeremiah 30:9).

The Bible also reveals who will serve with David as leaders of each of the 12 tribes of Israel. Jesus said to His disciples, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28).

The Bible doesn’t tell the exact job titles of most of the saints. But it is clear that Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, Moses and Rahab, and many more heroes of faith in the Old and New Testaments and beyond, will serve with Christ in bringing a fair and compassionate government to a world that so sorely needs it (Hebrews 11).

Causes of **War**



Human history is, at its core, the story of wars. We have historians and experts who study what led up to them, what weapons were developed and used, who was hurt most by them, who was considered the winner and what was done to prepare for the next one.

The spaces in between wars are often referred to as peace, but too often they are merely times of sorrow and recovery from the war just past or fear and preparation for the war to come. Precious little peace can be found in human history.

The Bible reveals that the cause of violence goes all the way back to the rebellion of Lucifer, who became known as Satan (Isaiah 14:12; Luke 10:18). “You became filled with violence within, and you sinned,” Ezekiel records about this rebellion (Ezekiel 28:16). Satan is described as a murderer, a roaring lion seeking prey and a dragon making war in heaven and on earth (John 8:44; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:7, 17).

Satan, humanity’s greatest adversary, currently rules this world, and broadcasts his attitudes of hate and violence into the minds of men (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2). His influence helps amplify our natural selfishness to a fevered pitch as described by James:

“Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war” (James 4:1-3).

And so we find ourselves in a world that desperately

needs and desires peace, yet which is far from it. Cries of “peace, peace” are too often wishful thinking, political maneuvering or outright deception (Jeremiah 6:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:3). Paul accurately described the human condition this way:

“Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known” (Romans 3:15-17).

Thankfully the Bible reveals that Jesus Christ will rescue this world from the final throes of the most destructive world war, before we annihilate ourselves (Matthew 24:22). Under His rule the elusive way of peace will finally be taught.

Swords into plowshares

In New York City today, outside the United Nations buildings, a famous sculpture of a man beating a sword into a farm implement captures the longing of humanity for peace—and hints at the way it will truly come. The inspiration for the statue—and the true hope for disarmament and peace—comes from a beautiful prophecy in Isaiah.

“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established



The “Let Us Beat Swords Into Plowshares” statue at the United Nations in New York City.

on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it.

“Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

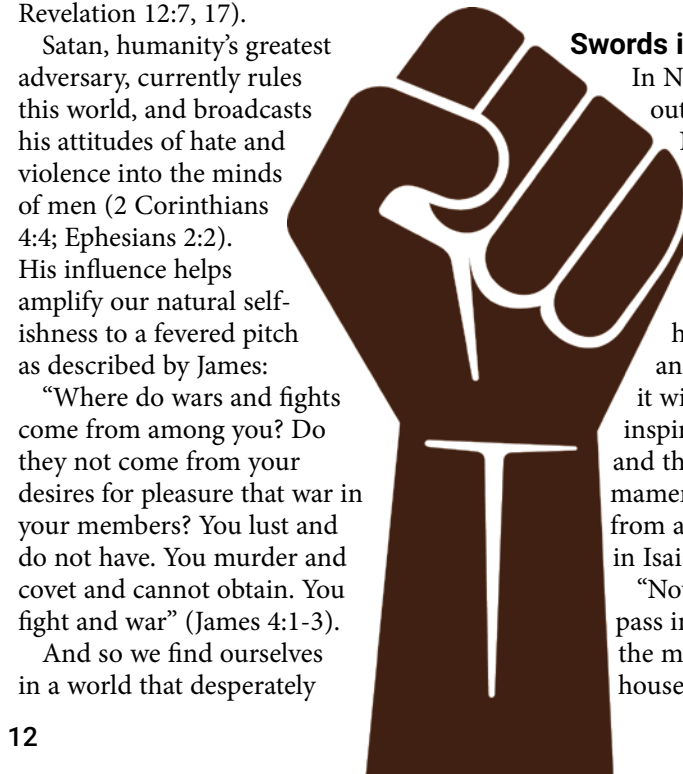
“He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:2-4; repeated in Micah 4:1-3).

What a wonderful vision! Finally disputes between nations will be resolved without resorting to the horrors of war (which only plant the seeds of future conflict). At last, nations will

be forced to disarm, but they will soon realize they have nothing to fear, since their neighbors will all be disarmed as well.

War colleges will be shut down and the militaries disbanded. No more will the young, with their bright hopes and great potentials, be used as cannon fodder. Instead of investing the best minds and greatest resources into developing weapons of destruction, nations will be able to invest in making life better for all their citizens.

Today some of the most impoverished nations in the world import inordinate amounts of arms. Weapons make up 33.5 percent of Eritrea’s imports and 20.5 percent of Ethiopia’s (John D. Wright, *Guide to the State of the World*, 2005, p. 87). Gone will be these wasteful arms races, and today’s dangerous neighborhoods—like in the Middle East, where 40 percent of arms exports go—will be peaceful at last.





The way of peace

Though Christ's rule will begin by halting wars using supernatural force, soon peace will spread through education in the way of peace. Christ's followers are taught to become peacemakers even in this present age (Matthew 5:9), and will teach others in the world to come.

Paul described some of the elements of this way of peace in his letter to the Romans: "Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.

"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord.

"On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:16-21, New International Version).

Many other biblical passages detail the attitude and approach of the peacemaker (for example, open your Bible and take time to read Romans 8:5-8; 14:17-19; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; 14:33; Philippians 2:3-5; 4:6-9; and James 3:17-18).

The way of peace, coupled with the justice and mercy of God's government, will provide effective conflict resolution on the personal and national level. Ultimately, every conflict can have a win-win solution that will benefit all parties for eternity.

Rebuilding and renewal

After the most devastating war in human history, there will be an incredible amount of cleanup and rebuilding to do. But this time people will be able

to rebuild knowing that it won't all be destroyed again in a few years by another war.

This time the rebuilding will be done in a sensible and sustainable way. Cities will be clean and safe. Villages and farmlands will be productive and beautiful. Picture these scenes from the words of the prophets:

"I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them" (Amos 9:14).

"So they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited'" (Ezekiel 36:35).

Even Jerusalem, the most fought over piece of real estate in history, will finally live up to the meaning of its name as a city of peace and safety:

"Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets" (Zechariah 8:4-5).

A world without war will be incredibly better than today's world. But a world with true peace—resulting from following God's way of peace—will be fantastic almost beyond human imagination!

God promises a world of peace and prosperity will come (Micah 4:1-4)! It's what everyone has always wanted, but mankind has never been able to achieve it. Why?



The entire world is in need of a heart transplant

God promises a world of peace and prosperity will come (Micah 4:1-4)! It's what everyone has always wanted, but mankind has never been able to achieve it. Why?

Why is humanity helpless to bring peace?

Science and technology haven't brought it. All the experiments in various governmental and economic systems haven't moved us closer to peace, but seem to draw us ever nearer to destruction.

Education should be a key to the kind of world we want. As God said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). But the kind of knowledge funneled into students' minds today doesn't seem to produce lasting happiness or to have brought the world closer to peace. Nor are parents instilling values and character training in their children at home.

Hosea makes it clear the missing knowledge is about God and His laws (Hosea 4:6-10). Modern education ignores and ridicules spiritual knowledge and belief in a Creator God. When humans are seen as evolving animals, and survival of the fittest is considered the active principle of the universe, how can we expect anything but selfishness and war-mongering? When information about the physical universe is seen as the highest knowledge, how can we expect anything more than greed and materialism?

When children are molded more by their entertainment and their peers than they are by spiritually mature and wise parents, how can future genera-

tions be truly prepared for life?

But, some would counter, has religion done any better? Haven't many bloody wars, atrocities and acts of terrorism been perpetrated in the name of religion?

The truth is, sadly, the major religions of the world do not fully follow the precepts of the Bible. They too have rejected or not known the way of peace. God's way has never been fully tried in this world. But it will be!

Source of evil removed

The Bible describes an evil being who has literally deceived the whole world from the time of the Garden of Eden until now (Revelation 12:9). He is the enemy of God, and fights to prevent humans from understanding and following God's ways.

But at Christ's return, John in vision saw an angel who "laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished" (Revelation 20:2-3).

Satan's "broadcast" (Ephesians 2:2) of negative attitudes and emotions will be ended! Finally mankind will be freed from slavery to Satan and sin! No more will religious deception be spread. Materialistic and humanistic education will be replaced with true education of the whole person—heart, mind and spirit.

Moreover, children will learn godly values from birth, growing up in stable homes led by lovingly strong fathers and nurtured by wise and caring mothers.

However, even without Satan's active presence, our human minds have been programmed throughout our lives to think the way Satan thinks. It will take time for God's way of thinking to sink in. The traditions, ideologies and thought patterns that come naturally today will eventually be seen for what they are—harmful and self-destructive. In the meantime, God's educational system will spread around the world, sometimes meeting pockets of resistance.

Interestingly, the Holy Days of God described in Leviticus 23 and reflected in many New Testament passages provide an outline of God's plan. (For more on this, download or request our booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*) The Bible tells us they will eventually be celebrated universally in God's Kingdom, just as they are today by His faithful Church.

"And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:16).

There is an indication that even this wonderful festival might be met with resistance. Zechariah records that God will need to encourage uncooperative nations to come to the Feast by withholding rain from them (verses 17-19). To overcome the influences held over from the "present evil age" (Galatians 1:4), this will be a necessary step.

But God knows such encouragement and coercion are not the ultimate solution. For people to become good citizens of His Kingdom, they must individually choose to make changes.

Changing hearts and minds

The author of Hebrews makes clear the changes needed to transform humans from the selfish and self-destructive beings of today to the giving, peacemaking and joyful citizens of God's Kingdom. For without changes to the human heart, we would soon revert to the evils of today rather than sustaining the beautiful world tomorrow.

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel [and eventually with all people—Romans 2:29; 10:11-13; 1 Timothy 2:4] after those days,’ says the Lord: ‘I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people’” (Hebrews 8:10, quoted from Jeremiah 31:33).

The problems of the world can ultimately be traced back to breaking God's eternal law of love. He has revealed that law in the Bible through the Ten Commandments, the first four of which show how to love God the way He wants to be loved, and the last six show how to love our neighbor as ourselves (Exodus 20:1-17; Matthew

22:37-40). These principles are explained and expanded throughout the Bible in every word of God.

But even the people to whom God revealed these laws did not keep them. As Hebrews records, the fault with the first covenant was “with them,” not with the perfect laws (Hebrews 8:7-8). When Israel agreed to obey God's laws, He told Moses wistfully, “Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!” (Deuteronomy 5:29).

Breaking those eternal laws required the death penalty. God's gracious plan included the incredible sacrifice of Jesus Christ to pay that penalty in our

place, so that the perfectly just and righteous God could also be perfectly merciful.

Because Christ willingly took our place, He said, “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more” (Hebrews 8:12).

A heart transplant

But God's graciousness doesn't end there. He also made it possible for us to have a new heart—one capable of living His way of love, obeying His laws.

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

The apostle Paul outlines this process

in Romans 12:2: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

The Bible describes this process as including repentance—not only seeing the need for forgiveness and conversion, but also deeply, humbly seeking God's mercy and fully committing to a life of change. It includes belief in God and acceptance of Christ's sacrifice to pay our penalty for sin.

This is followed by baptism, symbolizing burying the old person. Then comes the gift of God's Holy Spirit that makes it possible for us to truly become like God (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:37-38; Romans 6:3-7).

The many scriptures on this vital subject are amplified in the helpful free study aids *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion* and *The Road to Eternal Life*.

The wonders of the world **beyond today**



You've heard of the seven wonders of the ancient world, and some have tried to list the buildings and monuments that could be considered the wonders of the modern world. But what will the wonders of God's Kingdom be?

However magnificent the buildings will be, they will pale in comparison to the “wonders” described in Galatians 5:22-23. These nine fruits of God's Spirit are building blocks in producing God's heart and mind within us. Imagine a world where the works of the flesh listed in Galatians 5:19–21 no longer prevail. Better yet, imagine a world where these fruits of the Spirit are growing and spreading: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”

Imagine having a neighbor like that. Imagine having a teacher, a boss, a police officer and a mayor treat you that way—God's way!

What a wonderful world that will be! What an incredible future is ahead!

Jesus Christ

is coming with His Kingdom

Choose life today!

Everyone has a choice—a choice between life and death, good and evil and between God's Kingdom and Satan's. Right now mankind has chosen Satan's way—symbolized by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

But soon a new Kingdom is coming, not ruled by chaos and self-will, but by a King who loves peace and will reign in service and love to all mankind. Wars will cease and be replaced by brother and sister nations who will worship together in spirit and in truth. Sickness and disease will be cured, and the city streets will be filled with joy and laughter.

The choice is set before you. What will you choose? Will you choose Satan's way of self-will and destruction? Or will you choose God's way of a Christ-like life built on service and love?

Don't wait! Choose God's Kingdom—choose life—today!

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521/1410/1.0