

Armageddon

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World Peace

Armageddon has become a household word, as troubles spread their foreboding upon earth. It is used when there are conflicts between nations and ideologies, especially when there is worldwide turmoil. The news media has used it frequently, though it is questionable many times if the writer really knew the origin and background of the word. Most think of it as applying to a great struggle or mighty battle in which God is involved—a battle between good and evil—a battle to end all battles.

Armageddon is a Biblical term used in the closing book of the Bible associated with “the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” (Rev. 16:14) Revelation is a book of symbols setting forth an agelong struggle between truth and error, righteousness and unrighteousness, Christ and Antichrist. In this portrayal, such symbols as ‘beasts’, ‘dragon’, ‘false prophets’, ‘Babylon’, ‘harlot’, ‘unclean spirits’, ‘frogs’, etc., are used on the one hand; and on the other, ‘Lamb’, ‘bride’, ‘holy city’, and others. Armageddon is another of the symbols employed in the book, and it is associated with the great and final phase of a struggle ending the present age, when the kingdom of Christ rises victoriously, establishing universal and everlasting peace.

The word Armageddon is of Hebrew origin, and is associated geographically and historically with the hill of Megiddo. Megiddo occupied a strategic position in the ancient Holy Land, commanding as it did an important pass into the hill country. The general locality of Megiddo was the great battleground of Israel. Here Gideon and his three hundred men routed and defeated the Midianites. Here also, King Saul was defeated by the Philistines.

Many of the symbolism of the Bible are similar in nature to those with which the world is acquainted. The Bible, for example, uses beasts to represent kingdoms or governments, and so does the world. And the use of a battlefield to convey a certain idea is also practiced by the world. When we say, for example, that an army met its ‘Waterloo’, we mean that although it had been victorious for awhile, it finally met sudden and unexpected defeat. It was Napoleon’s defeat at Waterloo that caused such significance to be attached to this particular battleground.

So with Armageddon. It was Israel’s battleground, and to understand its symbolic meaning in the prophecies it is but necessary to discover the special characteristic associated with all the battles in which ancient Israel participated. It is not the fact that they were always victorious, for they were not. Sometimes God permitted his people to be defeated. This was because they had sinned against him and needed to be disciplined. However, there was one

outstanding characteristic of all Israel's battles which was not true, and never has been true, of battles fought between other nations; it is because God took a hand in them and overruled their victories and defeats in keeping with his own great plan of the ages.

When we take this fact into consideration, the word Armageddon assumes a significance just as definite as does Waterloo, although with a very different import. It suggests a struggle in which God is definitely interested, and in which he will direct the issue—assuring final and glorious victory for the forces of righteousness. Moreover, as the prophecies show, it is the last great battle of the ages, and will result in the permanent defeat of all the agencies of Satan, thus preparing the way for the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. This is why it is described as “the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”—Rev. 16:14

“THAT GREAT DAY”

The prophecies clearly show that the 'great day of God Almighty' is the period of time which marks the end of the present age. It is the time in which this “present evil world” (Gal. 1:4), or social order, comes to an end. It is described in the Bible as the 'Day of Vengeance', and as the 'last days'. It is also spoken of as the 'Day of the LORD', because it is the time when the LORD intervenes in the affairs of the world to halt their mad and downward rush into sin and destruction and to establish his long-promised kingdom.

This Day of the LORD is the time referred to by the prophecy which states, “Wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth [the social order] shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.”—Zeph. 3:8

This Day of Vengeance upon the nations is further described by the Prophet Isaiah. He wrote: “The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once.”—Isa. 42:13,14

THE REIGN OF EVIL

Ever since our first parents transgressed God's law, evil has been a dominant factor in the affairs of the human race. Satan has been the 'ruler' of man's world. Jesus spoke of him as “the prince of this world.” (John 12:31; 14:30) During the days of ancient Israel, when God ruled over his chosen people, other nations occasionally came in contact with Divine authority and power. Various heathen kings were compelled to acknowledge his sovereignty as a result of the miraculous manner in which he protected and delivered his people. But many long centuries have passed since the world has witnessed such manifestations of God's power, with the result that faith in him and in his ability to rule in the affairs of men is almost nonexistent in all the council chambers of the world.

God explains this situation by saying that he has refrained himself from interfering in world affairs, and has ‘holden his peace’. His people, on the other hand, have been encouraged to wait on the LORD until the day that he no longer holds his peace, until he ceases to refrain from intervening in the affairs of men, assured that then he would rise up to the prey, and that the whole earth—this present evil world—would be destroyed by the fire of his jealousy. It is in this work of destroying evil and evil systems that the LORD represents himself as going forth as a mighty man and stirring up jealousy like a man of war, and it is this that precipitates the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

While the LORD has permitted Satan, the great Adversary, to rule in the hearts of the children of disobedience, he has never ceased to be interested in the ultimate welfare of his human creatures. Indeed, throughout all the thousands of years during which he has refrained from interfering with the reign of sin and death, God has been laying the groundwork, as it were, for a glorious day of deliverance. But his plan of redemption and restoration has progressed silently and unobserved by the world. In Armageddon God will reveal himself to all mankind, and the eyes of all nations will be opened to behold his glory.

It was the fallen Lucifer, personified in Genesis as a serpent, and in Revelation 20:2 as “that old serpent” who introduced sin into the world. He deceived mother Eve, and through her induced Adam to transgress divine law. This brought upon them the penalty for sin, which is death. There the human race began to die. There selfishness became the motive of nearly all human endeavor, and out of selfishness has come animosity, hatred, crime, and wars. For six thousand years the dying world has struggled on, ever hoping for better times to come, but, because of selfishness, ever failing to attain its desired goals.

GOD’S HAND

But God still loves his human creation, and in his Word there is traced for us an outline of Divine accomplishments which eventually will lead to the complete overthrow of Satanic rule, and also to the destruction of all those hated elements of Satan’s reign of sin and death which have plagued the human race for so long. The manner in which God’s hand has been in the affairs of men throughout the ages is revealed to us largely by the brilliant array of promises recorded in his Word for our comfort and instruction.

While to the unenlightened it may appear that the promises of God represent merely the wishful thinking of ancient ideologists, yet in them can be recognized the pattern of the Divine purpose toward the human race. When we see that pattern, and the wonderful preparations the LORD has been making for the ultimate deliverance of mankind from the bondage of sin, sickness, and death, we are assured that there has been no miscarriage of the Divine plan—no instance in which the LORD has failed in the accomplishment of his grand and loving designs.

THE FIRST RAY OF HOPE

In his statement to that ‘old serpent’—the Devil—the Creator gives us the first indication

that despite the entrance of sin into the world he had not deserted his human creation. God said to Satan that the ‘seed’ of the woman “shall bruise thy head.” (Gen. 3:15) Had God later not signified his intentions toward the human race in greater detail through his prophets, we could not know what this vague statement to the serpent really meant. But in the light of the prophecies it becomes clear that the bruising of the serpent’s head by the seed of the woman is in reality a symbolic description of the overthrow of Satanic rule in the earth, and the triumph of the kingdom of Christ.

In the twentieth chapter of Revelation we are given a brief symbolic account of the method by which the seed of the woman is to bruise the ‘serpent’s’ head. We are told that an angel comes down from God out of heaven and that he lays hold upon that old ‘serpent’, which is the Devil and Satan, and binds him for a thousand years. This mighty angel is none other than the seed of promise—Christ—and the account gives us a brief description of the establishment of his kingdom and his thousand-year reign. It also shows that during this thousand years, the dead are resurrected and given an opportunity to live forever in the restored earth.

Long centuries after the tragedy in Eden, God again evinced his interest in the dying race by making a promise to his faithful servant, Abraham. He said to this father of Israel that he intended to bless all the families of the earth. In making this promise, God once more referred to a seed, an offspring, whose birth would be directed by Divine providence. God confirmed this promise by his oath, and it constituted the basis of Israel’s hope for a coming Messiah.

This promise was reiterated in various forms by all God’s holy prophets. Concerning the promised seed, the Prophet Isaiah wrote, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”—Isa. 9:6,7

Outstanding in this promise of a coming government of righteousness is the fact that its victory over the forces of evil is guaranteed by Divine, miracle-working power. The Son mentioned is Christ, and the prophet declares that the government shall be upon his shoulder. This means that the Divine Christ shoulders the responsibility for the outworking of God’s loving purpose to destroy evil from the earth, and to exalt righteousness.

How reassuring this is! It means that the unlimited ability of God which enabled him to create millions of worlds, which made man, and gave him life, which continues to give life to all living things, will power the attack of Christ against the forces of sin and death which form the bulwark of Satan’s mighty fortress of iniquity. The prophet declares, “The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this!”

THE SAVIOR BORN

This prophecy of Isaiah began to have its fulfillment with the birth of Jesus. He was born as a gift of Divine love, and as a surety that all God's far-reaching promises to bless the world would in due time be fulfilled. In keeping with this, how significant are the words of the prophecy of the angel, who, when announcing Jesus' birth, said, "Fear not: ... For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."—Luke 2:10,11

At the age of thirty, Jesus commenced his ministry—a ministry which was a constant reminder that he had come as a messenger from heaven to fulfill the promises of God to establish a worldwide government of peace and life. Some of the promises, in describing the blessings of the Messianic kingdom, foretold the opening of blind eyes, healing the sick, and raising the dead. Jesus employed Divine power to do these things and thus established the fact that he was indeed the seed of promise and that the God who had made such wonderful promises was abundantly able to fulfill them.

Jesus' earthly ministry was a very brief one, lasting only for three and one-half years. He was the foretold King of kings, yet a few of his enemies were permitted to crucify him. (Rev. 19:16) What a strange turn of events this must have appeared to be in the minds of those who had accepted him as the promised Messiah, the one who was to reign "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth"!—Ps. 72:8

Even more strange, no doubt, was the Master's philosophy of love, so rigidly practiced by him that he refused to offer any resistance whatsoever to those who seized and killed him. All the great rulers of the past and present have attained and maintained their power by giving courageous battle to all opposers. But Jesus did not attempt to defend himself, nor would he permit his disciples to do so. Upon his defenseless head there came down the wrath of his jealous enemies, and he was laid low in the grave.

But God's plan had not failed! The Apostle Paul tells us that love never fails. (I Cor. 13:8) Jesus willingly laid down his life as the Redeemer of the world, loving even his enemies. (John 3:16) While Satan may have thought that he had thwarted the Divine plan for Jesus to be king of earth, he had merely helped to bring about a necessary feature of that plan, namely, the sacrifice of the man, Christ Jesus, as a "ransom for all."—I Tim. 2:6

The blessings which God had promised were to be of an enduring character. The peace to be brought to mankind by Messiah's kingdom was to be a lasting peace, enjoyed by those who, redeemed from the curse of sin, would have the opportunity to live forever. There was no way to guarantee such permanent and far-reaching blessings for the human race except by the death of Jesus as the Redeemer and Savior of the world. He died that his subjects might live, and in order that all who have died might have the opportunity to be restored to life.

HUMANITY STILL SUFFERS

Almost twenty centuries have passed since that eventful time when Jesus died for the sins of the world and was raised from the dead by Divine power, yet he is still not recognized as the king of the earth; and the great enemy, Death, which he died to destroy, still holds the sin-

cursed race within its baneful clutches. While the prophecies depict Jesus as the Prince of Peace, war has continued to blight the happiness of each succeeding generation since his time, even as it had done before he came. Jesus came to give life, but the people for whom he gave his life still die. Jesus taught and exemplified the way of love and pointed out its advantages over selfishness—but selfishness still rules the world. Why?

The Sacred Word discloses the reason for this apparent delay. It shows that during these nineteen centuries of seeming failure, God's plan to liberate the race has gone steadily forward. His plan for the present age has been the choosing from among the world of mankind a people to be associated with Christ in exercising the authority of his kingdom. The Scriptures speak much of these, outlining the conditions upon which they may hope to live and reign with Christ. In brief, they are called to walk in his way of love, to lay down their lives as he sacrificed his, to prove their fidelity to God, to truth, and to righteousness by being "faithful unto death."—Rev. 2:10

The experiences of these in sacrifice and suffering prepare them for their future reign with Christ. In the providence of God, their part in the Divine plan will contribute to the everlasting blessing of all the families of the earth. For nineteen centuries, unnoticed and unknown by the world, these faithful followers of the Master have continued to strengthen the bridgehead of righteousness and love from which ultimately will come deliverance of all the prisoners of death. Preceding this deliverance of all mankind, the faithful class is raised from the dead in the first resurrection, to live and reign with Christ. And then, under the direction of Christ, all mankind will be awakened from the sleep of death and given an opportunity to live on the earth forever.

THE END OF THE AGE

Now this age in the plan of God, which is set aside for the choosing and training of those who will reign with Christ during the Millennial Age, is nearly completed. Indeed, we are living in the very end of the age; therefore it is the time when we should expect to see, and do see, the hand of God manifested definitely and directly in the affairs of men. The prophecies of God's Word outline the events of the present time and reveal them to be those which were immediately to precede the establishment of Christ's kingdom.

The series of calamitous events, beginning in 1914, which have toppled kings from their thrones, uprooted state churches, destroyed countless millions of mankind by war, famine, and pestilence, are all pointed out in the Sacred Word, and all bear testimony to the inescapable fact that God is no longer refraining himself from intervening in the affairs of men, that the day of his vengeance against sin and sinful institutions is at hand.

It is reassuring to realize that the final outcome of the present distress of nations is not in the hands of selfish, earthly rulers, but that the world of tomorrow is to be governed by the kingdom of Christ. It is also gratifying to realize that during the next thousand years the nations are not to be tyrannically subjected to the yoke of socialistic or communistic totalitarianism, or corrupt forms of democratic governments.

THE RIGHTFUL KING

As we have already seen, for a time God ruled over his ancient people of Israel. It is said in the Scriptures concerning various kings of Israel that they sat “upon the throne of the LORD.” But that arrangement came to an end with the dethronement of the last Jewish king, Zedekiah. The Prophet Ezekiel explains that this was to be “until he come whose right it is.” (Ezek. 21:27) This is a reference to Christ, and the clear implication is that not again would God be represented in any government of earth until the time would come for the kingdom of Christ to be established.

The overthrow of the last Jewish king occurred in 606 B.C., and there began a long period of time during which the LORD has permitted Gentile kingdoms to hold the social fabric of the world together. This period is described in a prophecy by Jesus as ‘the times of the Gentiles’. In this prophecy Jesus explained that “Jerusalem”—a symbol of the Jewish people and their polity—would be “trodden down” by the Gentiles until “the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”—Luke 21:24

There is Scriptural evidence to show that the times of the Gentiles is a period of 2520 years. It began in 606 B.C. Babylon was the first of the Gentile powers to exercise authority within this period. About the time of its beginning, the LORD caused Nebuchadnezzar to dream that he saw a human-like image, which Daniel interpreted to represent the Divine grant of authority as it would be exercised, first by Babylon, and then successively by Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

In this prophetic image, Rome is represented by the legs of iron, and the divided Roman Empire, as seen in the various states of Europe just prior to 1914, was represented by the toes of the image. In the vision, a stone is seen to smite the image on its feet, causing it to fall, and grinding it to powder. Daniel explains that this stone represents the kingdom of God, a kingdom which ultimately is to fill the whole earth.

The 2520 years of the times of the Gentiles were due to terminate in 1914. Since this prophetic period was related to both Jews and Gentiles as nations, events since that time should indicate a change in the status of both—and this is, indeed, the case. The last remnants of the old Roman Empire are being destroyed—being ground to powder—while the Jews as a people have possession of much of Palestine, and a new state of Israel is flourishing. We are still in the ‘grinding’ period, but enough has already occurred to justify the conviction that the unseen forces of our present Lord are already exercising a tremendous influence in destroying Satan’s social order preparatory to the establishment in the earth of Christ’s kingdom, and the blessing of all mankind with peace and life.

Viewed from this standpoint, the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 constitutes substantial proof that Jesus Christ, as the General of Jehovah, is subduing the nations prior to receiving them from the Father as his inheritance. (Ps. 2:8) What we see occurring is in fulfillment of the first portion of Zephaniah 3:8. It speaks of the LORD, or Jehovah, rising up as a witness—to condemn earth’s society—and he says, “My decision is to gather

nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out on them mine indignation, all the glow of mine anger.” (Rotherham Translation) The writers of secular history refer to World War I as “the beginning” of all the troubles that have enveloped mankind since that time, and the Second World War as a resumption of hostilities that had ceased for awhile. All of this is to take place in the Day of the LORD’s Wrath, in “that great day of God Almighty” (Rev. 16:14), and as a result, the whole fabric of civilization has been weakened.

Every phase of the ‘last days’ distress upon nations has to do with the overthrow of Satan’s rulership. Note, for example, the prophecy of Isaiah 13:4-6: “The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the LORD of hosts mustereth the host of the battle. They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, even the LORD, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land. Howl ye; for the Day of the LORD [Jehovah] is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.”

The Apostle Paul, in his description of the Day of the LORD, says that “sudden destruction” shall come “as travail upon a woman with child.” (I Thess. 5:1-3) Travail, as we know, comes in spasms with periods of comparative easement between the pains. This has been the pattern of events since the end of the ‘times of the Gentiles’ in 1914. Paul foretold that these spasms would be associated with cries of ‘peace and safety’, and this prophecy, also, has proved to be very accurate.

Prior to the First World War, tremendous efforts were made to establish lasting world peace. Nineteen hundred and thirteen was an international peace year. Then came the first spasm of destructive trouble. Following the war there were further cries of peace and safety. Then came the second global struggle, followed by additional cries of “Peace, peace!” But the disintegration continues, and will continue, until divine intervention manifests itself and brings genuine peace to a trouble-weary and dying world.

While God fought for his people on the ancient battlefield of Megiddo, giving them the victory when their obedience deserved it, his strategy was not always the same. In the case of Gideon’s victory over the Midianites, the LORD’s strategy resulted in Israel’s enemies destroying one another. On other occasions, miracle-working power was used. So it is in the great battle by which the kingdoms of this world are set aside preparatory to the establishment of Christ’s kingdom. One prophecy declares that “every man’s sword shall be against his brother.” (Ezek. 38:21) The kingdoms of this world, in their fighting against one another, have already wrought terrible destruction against the strongholds of civilization, and the end is not yet.

Twice the nations have united in an effort to save the world from further destruction; but, as the prophecies foretold, these associations have not accomplished their purpose. Isaiah wrote, “Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken.” (Isa. 8:9,10) Another prophecy concerning this gathering of the nations is Joel 3:1,2. Here this uniting of the nations is associated in point of time with the regathering of Israel to their Promised Land. It indicates that there would be a controversy over the land, and that the LORD would then

plead for his people and would be in opposition to those who endeavored to rob them of their rightful inheritance.

Further details of these particular events are set forth in the prophecy of Ezekiel, chapters 38 and 39. Briefly, these prophecies revealed that Israel would ultimately repossess the land of Palestine, dwelling there in a measure of peace and security [or assurance] when out of the “north” will come aggressor nations to “take a spoil.” Students of prophecy expect that the nations north of Israel will be involved in this final thrust of aggression and an attempt will be made to destroy Israel, and to occupy the militarily strategic Holy Land.

It is at this point that the LORD outwardly demonstrates his intervention. The prophecy in Ezekiel 38:22 states that then the LORD will plead against Israel’s enemies “with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.” We may not know how literally this will be fulfilled, but it is certain that in this prophecy is described the great climax of Armageddon—that great struggle in which God will use his power to defeat the enemies of righteousness and cause the Divine kingdom to become operative for the blessing of all the families of the earth.

We know this is true, for the prophecy reveals that as a result of Divine intervention, all the nations—including Israel, whom the LORD then delivers—will, by his miraculous intervention, have their eyes opened to behold his glory. Then all nations will know that there is a God in heaven, who, through his Divine Christ, is ruling among the children of men.

A PURE MESSAGE

In Revelation 16:13,14, we are told of three unclean spirits that would wield a powerful influence in gathering the nations into the battle of that great day of God Almighty. The clean, or Holy Spirit of the Bible, is the Spirit of truth as it centers in the Gospel of Christ. Its characteristics are love, joy, peace, mercy, patience, etc. The prophetic unclean spirits are, therefore, manifestly unholy powers in the earth whose commanding propaganda influences the nations to gather, and by which they are induced to war upon one another unto the death.

But following Armageddon, when the LORD shall have ‘devoured’ the whole world with the ‘fire of his jealousy’, thus destroying all the various systems of iniquity, he will “turn to the people a pure language,” or message. This message, the prophet states, will result in all calling upon the name of the LORD “to serve him with one consent.”—Zeph. 3:8,9

This will be one of the ways by which, during the reign of Christ, love will be caused to replace selfishness as a motivating power in human affairs. And under the administration of that kingdom of righteousness, all mankind will find satisfaction and joy. Indeed, even the dead are to be raised in order that they, too, may enjoy the life-giving blessings that no conqueror has ever been able to give his subjects. But Christ can, and will give them the

opportunity to enjoy everlasting life in peace and happiness.

It is through our assurance of Divine ability and purpose to restore all who lose their lives in Armageddon that we are able to see God's love and justice in the method his wisdom has chosen to overthrow Satan's rulership over the people. Those who lose their lives in this great struggle will be, from God's standpoint, merely asleep. His power will awaken them in the morning of the new day. They will have an opportunity to see the final outcome of the great struggle in which they suffered; and without doubt most of them will gladly take the oath of allegiance to the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who then will be the recognized sovereign of the whole earth.—Rev. 19:16; Ps. 72:1-4

The experience with sin and death throughout the ages has been a trying one, and particularly now, when, because of human selfishness, there is worldwide "distress of nations, with perplexity." (Luke 21:25) But the lessons to be learned therefrom will be of inestimable value, especially in that they will greatly increase appreciation of the blessing of life which will be given to the people during the thousand years of Christ's reign.

Through this experience, all mankind will learn the terrible results of disobeying Divine law. By contrast, when the kingdom blessings are showered upon them, they will learn of divine goodness, and their hearty response will be, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, ... we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."—Isa. 25:6-9

For a thousand years that kingdom will reign. Its influences of joy and peace and love and life will be extended into every nook and corner of the globe. Its healing power will empty every hospital bed. Its life-giving energy will reach down into every tomb. All the blind eyes will be opened, and all the deaf ears will be unstopped.—Isa. 35

No longer will Satan be permitted to deceive or mislead the people. Nor will his rule of selfishness and hate be permitted further to destroy the peace and happiness of men and nations. As a result of the educational program of Christ's kingdom, the world will learn the advantages of love and mercy over selfishness and hate. Instead of securing all they can for themselves, the people will learn that the real secret of deep and lasting joy is in doing all they can for others.

God's promise to Abraham to bless all the families of the earth through his seed will then be fulfilled. As we have seen, Christ and his church, in the heavenly phase of the kingdom, will be this promised seed, and they will then be the channel of life-giving blessings to all the restored race of mankind.—Gal. 3:29

All the families of the earth who lived in Abraham's day, and before, are now dead. All the families of the earth who have lived since, are now dead or dying. The ever-mounting toll of death in a world gone mad with selfishness brings home to us with increasing force the great need for Divine intervention, and we can rejoice that this is near. The fact that all whom God has promised to bless are either dead or dying in no way disannuls his promises, for we are assured that his power can and will restore life; for all who are in their graves shall hear the

voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth.—John 5:28,29

Is this mere wishful thinking? Nay, verily, it is what the God and Creator of the universe has promised!

It is that which will reveal to the masses of mankind that they were not created merely to suffer and die. It will show that God, whose mighty power and wisdom are revealed in all created things, loved them, and has used his power to assure the victorious accomplishment of his purpose in their creation.

At the close of that thousand-year reign of Christ, Satan—the instigator of all evil—will be destroyed. Those who willfully continue to serve him will also be destroyed in “the second death.” While countless billions died as a result of Satan’s usurped rulership over the human race, he will be on the casualty list resulting from the reign of Christ.—Rev. 20:10,14

And not Satan alone, but all the evils will be vanquished which constitute his stock-in-trade of deceitful and malicious methods by which he deceived and enslaved the fallen race. Sickness and pain and sorrow will be destroyed. And death itself will die!—Rev. 21:4

All of this is because Divine intervention will overthrow the rulership of Satan, ‘that old serpent’, who induced our first parents to transgress Divine law and brought upon themselves and their offspring the penalty of death. One of the beautiful symbolism given us in the Book of Revelation to illustrate Divine intervention to rescue the human race from death is the ‘holy city’ coming down from God out of heaven.—Rev. 21:2

In the Bible, a city represents a government, and the holy city is a righteous government. But it is not of human origin. It is not a man-made government. It emanates from God, out of heaven, and is established on the earth. Earlier in the Book of Revelation, attention is called to a very unholy city called ‘Babylon’. For a time it ruled over the kings of earth. Associated with this ‘harlot’ city is a symbolic ‘beast’—another symbol of unholy rulership. But there is a struggle between the beast and the Lamb—Christ. The beast, together with the unholy city of Babylon, is destroyed.

Thus the way is prepared for the holy city, through which the Lamb, together with his bride, rules over the nations. This new rulership will mean that God is truly represented in the earth. Explaining this point the Revelator says, “I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”—Rev. 21:3

When, on account of sin, God withdrew his favor from the human race, the people began to die. David wrote, “In his favour is life.” (Ps. 30:5) But when God again ‘tabernacles’ with the people, when his favor is manifested toward them through the agencies of Christ’s kingdom, the holy city, one of the blessed results will be the destruction of death. Paul wrote that Christ will reign until all enemies are put under his feet, and that the last enemy to be destroyed is death. (I Cor. 15:25,26) This same blessed thought is emphasized by the

Revelator. Explaining the results of God's returned favor to the people, as manifested in the holy city taking control in the affairs of men, he writes: "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. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful."—Rev. 21:4,5

Praise God for this assurance of the final triumph of righteousness over sin and death! And when we realize that the kingdom which will manifest Christ's victory is so near, we need not be appalled at the thought of the worldwide Armageddon struggle which will cause the overthrow of the last remnants of Satan's rulership. We know this is necessary in order that the people might have a full and unhindered opportunity to accept the rulership of Christ. Truly, we should now pray with greater fervor than ever, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."—Matt. 6:10