

WHAT IS THIS WORLD COMING TO?

The news media has been describing the Covid-19 crisis as “*apocalyptic*,” and, indeed, it has been tragic for hundreds of thousands, as death tolls rise and financial calamities continue to ripple around the world. Many Christians are speculating that this Covid-19 pandemic will ultimately usher in the final day of judgment for humanity. These claim that soon, all Christians will be swept up to heaven in an instant, while those who remain will be subjected to a period of shame and torment, ending with the annihilation of the world by fire. But, is that what the Scriptures really teach? There are many popular misconceptions regarding the purpose of the Lord’s return and the Day of Judgment.

SCRIPTURE TESTIMONY REASONABLE

The Bible does speak of “*spasms*” of trouble which will lead to the final collapse of this *present evil world*, but, is there any Scriptural evidence to support the alarming predictions about the destiny of earth and its non-Christian inhabitants?

When the Scriptures are studied topically and in context, they indicate something very different than the often dismal view for earth’s billions. The prophet Haggai declares that in the Judgment Day “*the desire of all nations shall come!*” (Haggai 2:7) John the Revelator stated of this *day* that it would be a time for “*the healing of the nations.*” (Revelation 22:2) Isaiah portrayed “*the day of the Lord*” as a wonderful time when “*none shall hurt nor destroy*” in all God’s holy mountain: for the earth shall then “*be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*” (Isaiah 11:9) How do we reconcile these scriptures, which paint a very beautiful picture of the Day of Judgment, in contrast with a day of dread and lasting torment for earth’s billions?

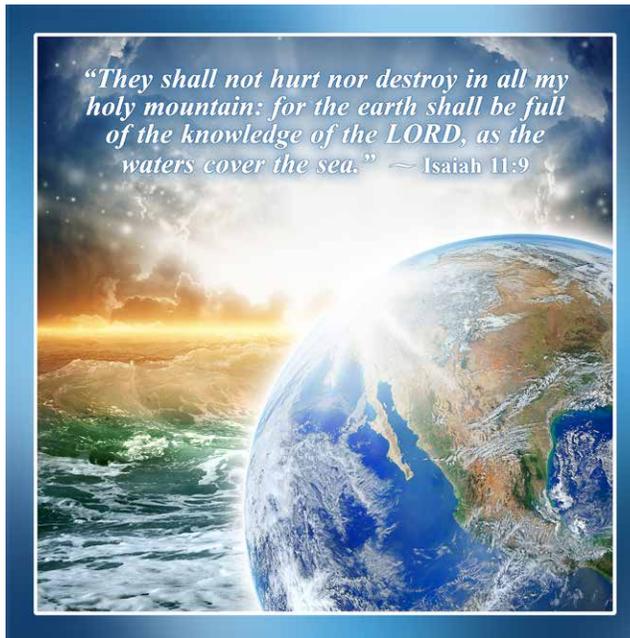
1. THE JUDGMENT DAY: 24 HOURS OR 1,000 YEARS?

The term *judgment* (Greek, *krisis*) as defined in Scripture signifies more than merely the rendering of a verdict — it also includes a period of a trial. The term *day*, both in the Scriptures and in common usage, often signifies a span of time greater than 24 hours, such as Noah’s *day* or Jesus’ *day*. “*Your father*

Abraham rejoiced to see my day... and was glad.” John 8:56

Of this Day of Judgment, the Apostle Peter states: “*...be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord*

as a thousand years....” (2 Peter 3:8) Hence, the Judgment Day applies to the one thousand-year Millennial Age. This is the same time period when Satan will be bound for a thousand years “*to deceive the nations no more.*” (Revelation 20:1-3) It is the same thousand years that Christ and his Bride, the Church, will rule over and bless the “*poor groaning creation.*” “*For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.*” (Romans 8:19 NAS) In this thousand-year *day* of God’s Kingdom, when it is fully established upon earth, mankind will gratefully say: “*Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.*” Isaiah 25:9



2. THE PURPOSE OF THE JUDGMENT DAY: TO DESTROY OR TO TEACH?

Isaiah foretells of the purpose of this Judgment Day: “*for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.*” (Isaiah 26:9) The Apostle Paul assures us that the Day of Judgment will be a glorious and desirable day. “*He hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness....*” (Acts 17:31) Hence, this *day* of the Lord will be a time of instruction in righteousness for earth’s billions who have never had a fair opportunity to hear of the Word of truth and to understand the plan of salvation.

Compared to what is generally preached today, how differently the prophets and apostles have regarded the purpose of that promised Day of Judgment. Consider the exultant prophetic utterance of King David: “*Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, the Lord reigneth.... let the fields rejoice, and all that is therein. Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the Lord, because he cometh to judge the earth. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy*

endureth forever.” (1 Chronicles 16:31-34) Note here that the Judgment Day is associated with the goodness and mercy of God. For a world which has been burdened with over six thousand years of sin, sorrow and death, this proclamation of the coming judgment upon the people of the earth is certainly a day to look forward to — not to fear.

3. EARTH DESTROYED: LITERAL OR SYMBOLIC FIRE?

In this time of great prophetic expectation, the expression *end of the world* is frequently used by Christians and has been associated with the complete destruction of the planet. However, this gloomy prospect is the result of a misleading Bible translation which should more accurately read *end of the age* and not *end of the world*. (See Matthew 24:3 *Emphasized Translation*: “*the conclusion of the age.*”) This thought harmonizes with the Apostle Peter’s historic review of Noah’s day when he explained that “*the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.*” (2 Peter 3:6) Obviously, it was not the literal world which came to an end — merely a ceasing of that order or condition of things which prevailed on the earth prior to the time of the flood. The end of the corrupt world of Noah’s day then gave mankind a fresh start. This harmonizes with God’s promise in Genesis 8:21: “*I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.*” Similarly, the ending of this present old world means the opening of the “*new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*” (2 Peter 3:13) Then, under Christ’s reign, and with Satan bound, the majority of the world’s inhabitants will have their first real chance at success as they endeavor to walk up the “*highway of holiness.*” (Isaiah 35:8) Yes, ages may end and be succeeded by other ages, but the Bible declares that “*the earth abideth forever.*” Ecclesiastes 1:4

Some may ask, since Zephaniah 3:8 states that “*...all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy,*” does this not indicate that the earth will be burned up? No, because fire in this scripture cannot be taken literally, for the context in verse 9 concludes with the promise that God will then “*turn to the people a pure language that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.*”

As a further confirmation that *fire* is more commonly symbolic, review 2 Peter 3:10 which reads: “*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*” If taken literally, these words contradict that “*the earth abideth forever.*” A literal

interpretation would also present a significant problem if the literal *heavens* were to melt with fervent heat — where Christ, his Church and the angels abide. Here again, the symbolism of *fire* represents the *destruction* of the **elements** and **works** of the old earthly systems which have been under the reign of Satan and his minions. These are the present corrupt ecclesiastical “*heavens*” and political-social systems of earth. God declares: “*The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool,*” and “*I will make the place of my feet glorious.*” (Isaiah 66:1; 60:13) Surely, the earth would not be glorious if burned up.

4. ARMAGEDDON: IS THERE A CONSTRUCTIVE PURPOSE?

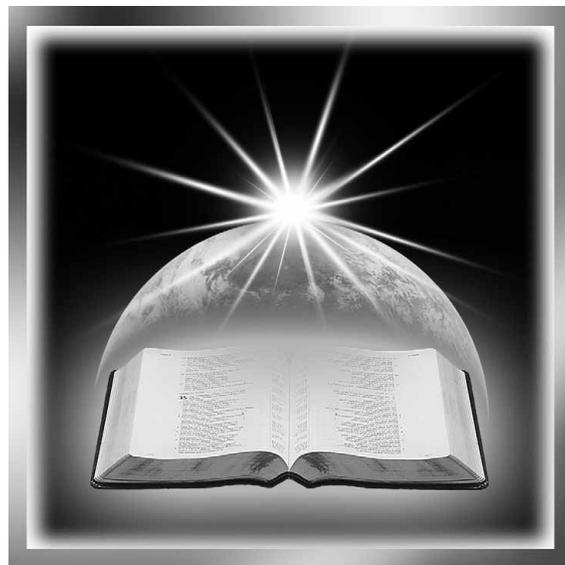
The Scriptures do speak of the *Battle of Armageddon* — a momentous time of trouble coinciding with the final collapse of this old order. (Revelation 16:16; Daniel 12:1) However, the true purpose of Armageddon is, as stated above, to cleanse the earth of the systems of corruption which have been under the control of Satan and his servants. The revolutions, wars, disease and sorrow among all nations that constitute this *great time of trouble* will be the ultimate lesson of man’s inability to govern righteously.

It is important to understand that all corrupt ecclesiastical and civil **systems** need to be destroyed — not the ignorant people misled by these systems. “*Every valley [the poor, oppressed, suffering world of mankind] shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill [proud and oppressive systems of this world] shall be made low...*” (Isaiah 40:4) Selfish human institutions are to be destroyed forever as a result of the

Battle of Armageddon, not the billions of good-hearted people — those who have not known and accepted Jesus in this life.

5. SALVATION: IS NOW THE ONLY TIME?

Most Christians are taught that now is the only time for salvation. However, ever since Adam fell in the Garden of Eden, his children have been plagued by sin and sorrow and most have never really had a chance to learn the *real good news*. God saw that, through inherited weakness and the influence of Satan, the majority of mankind would not be capable of responding to His counsels. But the fact is that Jesus Christ “*tasted death for every man*” and provided “*a ransom for all to be testified in due time.*” (Hebrews 2:9; 1 Timothy 2:6) Christ himself stated that this present age is not the *due time* for the majority to learn of him, when he declared that the Bible was purposely written in parables and symbols so that the majority would **not** be converted at this time. “*Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without all these things are done in parables. That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.*” (Mark 4:11-12) If now is



the only time for all to be converted, we would ask, why did Jesus not give a clear message so that *all* could have an equal opportunity to understand his words of salvation?

The reality is that now is the time for the selection of a few with ears to hear — the Church. After this nighttime of sorrow, all others will come forth from their graves ready to hear, seeking the full knowledge of the Lord. With Satan bound, they will have *for the first time* a reasonable opportunity to be brought to perfection and everlasting life. Jeremiah 31:34 says of that time, “...*they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest.*” Verse 29 also shows that, for the majority of mankind, the kingdom will provide the *first* full, fair opportunity for salvation through the knowledge of Christ. They will no longer die for the inherited sins of their fathers but, if they refuse God’s generous mercy during the reign of righteousness, they will then die for their own iniquity. (Jeremiah 31:29, 30) By the end of this powerful lesson, every reformed sinner will have the Law of God written in his heart. Jeremiah 31:33

6. CHRIST’S RETURN: WHAT IS THE REAL PURPOSE?

Yes, it has been a misunderstanding of Scriptural testimony to think that now is the time to convert the entire world. No, the purpose of the Christian era has been for the conversion of a faithful few, a “*little flock*” who will live and reign with Christ during the thousand years of the Judgment Day. It will not be the *due time* for the conversion of the remainder of mankind until that glorious reign begins. This is when Christ turns his attention to the world of mankind in general — those who have never had the mental or moral capacity to know Christ in this Gospel Age. “*After this [after selecting the faithful of the Gospel Age] I will return and build again the tabernacle of David [set up the kingdom of God]... that the remainder of men might seek after the Lord...*” (Acts 15:14-17) Again, this thousand-year Kingdom of Christ will be the first full, fair opportunity for billions to hear and believe. The little flock will reign along with Christ during this thousand years to bless and “*judge the world in righteousness.*” 1 Corinthians 6:2; Revelation 20:6; Psalm 96:13

The Apostle Peter states that “*times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord... the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.*” (Acts 3:19-21) This will be the time when everything that was lost in the Garden of Eden will be restored — life, health, peace, equality, freedom from fear, a perfect earth, and harmony with God. (Luke 19:10; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Revelation 22:17; Isaiah 35:5-10; Psalm 72:7; Isaiah 2:4; Job 5:22,23; Jeremiah 31:34; Ephesians 1:10) It will take all of the thousand-year Judgment Day to complete the great work of restoring mankind to all that was lost in Adam. But then, under the benevolent reign of Christ and his Church,

“*the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.*” (Isaiah 11:9) Anyone who is not willing to learn righteousness, after having been given a thorough education in a perfect environment, will receive the verdict of death — *second death.* (Acts 3:23) These will have squandered their chance to live again after being ransomed from the *first death* — the penalty for sin which all inherited from Adam.

THE GLORIOUS ENDING OF THIS THOUSAND-YEAR JUDGMENT DAY!

The Bible speaks of a glorious conclusion to the collapse of Satan’s *present evil world.* (2 Corinthians 4:4; Galatians 1:4) The wars, disease and sorrow among all nations that constitute this *great time of trouble* will illustrate the lasting lesson of fallen man’s inability to heal the world of its many ills. Yes, humanity must learn that the best and the worst of earth’s nations are but

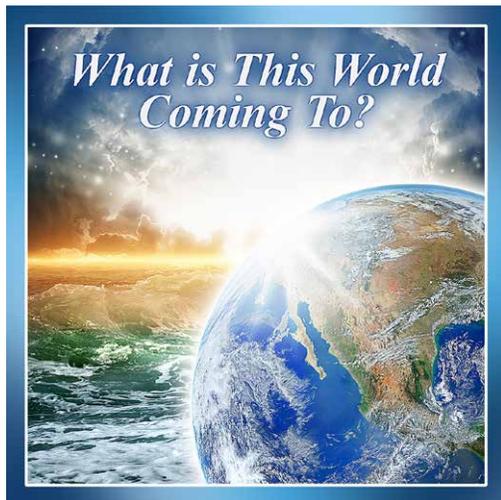
“*kingdoms of this world,*” whose *lease of power* from God has expired. (Luke 21:24) But until they are willing to turn to the rightful King, Christ Jesus, we will continue to see *spasms* of trouble in the earth, each one getting worse and more frequent: “...*they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth*” in childbirth. (Isaiah 13:6-8) As a mother who gives birth, all can rejoice, for God’s Kingdom is soon to be born! (Matthew 6:10) Christ and his Church, ruling from heaven, shall intervene on behalf of the “*poor groaning creation*” and will put an end to all sorrow.

While the majority of Christians emphasize the trouble with which

Satan’s kingdom terminates, we prefer to emphasize the glorious outcome — that in *due time, all the families of the earth will be blessed!* (Genesis 22:18) A glorious outcome is prophesied, for upon the ashes of earth’s sorrows, Messiah’s kingdom will be established throughout heaven and earth. “*And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.*” Isaiah 2:2

With the many hard lessons of sorrow under Satan, the cruel task-master, people will at last desire to turn to God for deliverance. Then, under the benevolent rulership of His Son, Jehovah’s intelligent creation will be ready to learn righteousness. As terrible as the coming trouble is expected to be, it is comforting to know its lessons will be so severe as to make no repetition of them necessary. It will soon be God’s *due time* for lifting the lost and dying race up from their graves and offering them a path to perfect life. When the thousand-year Judgment day has ended, all things will once again be in perfect harmony with the Creator. At that time, God, through His Son, will have wiped away “*all tears from their eyes.*” Revelation 21:4





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