



After
Armageddon...

God's
Kingdom

“The Earth will be filled with
the knowledge of the LORD,
as the waters cover the sea.”

Habakkuk 2:14 NIV





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After Armageddon... God's Kingdom!

The trouble in the world seems to be gathering momentum. Television, radio and newspapers fill our minds almost daily with catastrophic events happening throughout the world.

The world is being plagued with terrorist attacks. Wars are fought not against conventional armies, but suicide terrorists. Who can forget the tragic collapse of the Twin Towers on 9/11 when thousands of innocent people lost their lives because of a handful of terrorists? Nations are worried that terrorists or radical governments might acquire a nuclear weapon to destroy their enemies in a nuclear holocaust.

Earthquakes are increasing at an alarming rate all around the world. These, in turn, have produced heart-wrenching scenes of Tsunamis wiping away entire cities and tens of thousands of lives.

Throughout the World, people subjected to poverty with their rights oppressed, rise up in revolt against corrupt leaders and governments.

In these catastrophic events and increasing threats, media news anchors use the term “**Armageddon**” ever more frequently. People wonder if all this trouble indicates that we are approaching the “Armageddon” of the Book of Revelation.

GATHERING TO ARMAGEDDON

Revelation 16:13-20 (NIV): “I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs...they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty...they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon...then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the

quake...and the cities of the nations collapsed...and every island fled away, and the mountains could not be found.”

The language of Revelation is highly symbolic. “Armageddon” is understood by some as a final great cataclysmic event that will destroy by literal fire the heavens above and our literal planet earth—together with all remaining unbelievers.

SYMBOLIC HEAVENS AND EARTH

This concept of such mass destruction is based on a misunderstanding of the symbolic pictures in Revelation and in 2 Peter 3:10 which states, “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.”

At first reading, this scripture may seem to support the idea that everything will be destroyed in Armageddon. But this scripture is actually using figurative language and should not be taken literally.

The heavens being destroyed could not possibly refer to the heaven of God’s abode or the billions of stars and galaxies in our universe. Nor could the destruction of the earth refer to the literal planet on which we live. For notice what God says in Ecclesiastes 1:4 (NIV), “Generations come and generations go, but the **earth remains forever.**” This scripture is a plain and simple statement. “The earth remains forever!”

Why, then, does Peter talk about the “heavens” and the “earth” being destroyed by fire? Since God inspired the entire Bible, we know that it cannot make contradictory statements. Following this principle leads to the logical conclusion that the statement by Peter must be symbolic in some way.

In 2 Corinthians 4:4, the Apostle Paul says that Satan is the god of this present evil world. “The god of this world [Satan] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.” The “heavens” and “earth” of 2 Peter 3:10 refer to the spiritual forces and earthly governments of his domain. When Peter states that the heavens and earth will be burned up he is saying that all the works of injustice and iniquity of Satan’s empire will some day be removed and destroyed.

The “heavens” picture the **spiritual aspect** of Satan’s empire with its false **religious systems**. The “earth” symbolizes the finan-

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cial, political, and social aspects of this world. These elements of Satan's empire will be "burned up," or destroyed in Armageddon.

NEW HEAVENS AND EARTH

After Satan's systems are destroyed, notice what Peter says will replace them. "According to his promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which **righteousness** dwells" (2 Peter 3:13, NAS). God will replace the present evil order of society with a new, righteous order.



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This new heavens and earth refers to the Kingdom of God for which Jesus taught us to pray: “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy **kingdom** come, Thy will be done in **earth** as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:9, 10). Jesus was telling us that God’s Kingdom will be right here — on the **Earth!**

In keeping with the symbolic nature of Peter’s words we see that the new heavens refer to the new spiritual ruling power of God’s Kingdom that will govern earth’s new society. The new earth will not literally be a new planet but symbolically refers to a transformed society on earth which will be holy and righteous.

BEYOND ARMAGEDDON— GOD’S KINGDOM OF BLESSINGS ON EARTH

There are many scriptures that refer to a great “time of trouble” which will remove this present social order. In every case we will see that what follows the trouble will be a great blessing to mankind — the Kingdom of God — right here, on planet Earth! Following are a few examples.

PSALM 46:1-10

This passage speaks of the time of trouble that will “**melt** the earth” at the end of this present age. The Psalm begins by giving encouragement and comfort to God’s people as the trouble approaches.

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging...Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the **earth melts**...Come and see the works of the LORD, the **desolations** he has brought on the **earth**” (Psalm 46:1-8 NIV).

This is the same end time trouble referred to in Revelation and in 2 Peter 3. The elements melting refer to the dissolution and removal of earth’s old social structure. But notice what follows in the very next verse, after the symbolic earth melts from the heat of trouble.

“He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth” (Psalm 46:9,10 NIV).

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After the **symbolic melting of earth, the Earth** is still here! God makes wars to “cease to the ends of the earth.” That will be the time of God’s Kingdom, when God will be exalted among the nations. Where are those nations? Here, on Earth! God said, “I will be exalted in the **earth!**” Yes, the Earth will abide forever. The melting is only symbolic. Satan’s empire will melt away, replaced with God’s Kingdom.

ZEPHANIAH 3:8, 9

We read a similar passage in Zephaniah 3:8. “Therefore 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 shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.”

Again we read of the destruction of the symbolic earth being devoured by fire. But notice what God does in the very next verse (verse 9), “Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.”

After removing the present corrupt systems, the Kingdom of blessings will immediately follow. During the promised 1,000 year Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20:6), all mankind will be raised from the tomb of death and learn a “pure language” — the pure and true understanding of God’s Word, His plan and His will. This new understanding will provide every person an opportunity to receive everlasting life on a perfected earth.

In prophecy after prophecy regarding the trouble of Armageddon, we have the same promise repeated. The scriptures clearly state that following the trouble will come the blessings of God’s Kingdom on Earth.

HAGGAI 2:6, 7

Haggai 2:6 states, “Thus says Jehovah of hosts, Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth...I will shake all nations!” This refers to the shaking of Armageddon that will remove the present symbolic heavens and earth of Satan’s empire. Then, in the very next verse (verse 7), God says, “**And the desire of all nations shall come**, saith Jehovah of Hosts.”

What a precious promise! After the trouble, come the blessings. “The desire of all nations will come!” What do all people desire?

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Peace, health, freedom from fear and anxiety — and above all, **everlasting life!** The opportunity for all of these, and more, is promised by God for every man, woman and child in His Kingdom on Earth.

WHY DOES GOD PERMIT PAIN, SICKNESS AND DEATH?

But, we might be thinking that this sounds wonderful, but if this is so, that God intends to bring “The desire of all nations,” then why didn’t God do this from the very beginning? Why, for thousands of years, has God allowed man to suffer pain, sickness, and death?

In order to answer this universal question, we ask you to do something we doubt you were ever asked to do before. For a few moments, try to imagine yourself being in God’s place! We know that is rather difficult but give it a try. Are you ready? The setting is just after you finished creating the angelic hosts and all the stars, galaxies and planets.

Now try to envision that you are beginning to contemplate creating a new race of intelligent human beings. You want them to



remain sinless and perfect so you begin thinking about various possibilities of how to proceed. What would you do? Your first thought might be, I'll create them in such a way that it will be impossible for them ever to do anything wrong, simply by not allowing freedom of choice. As a result of their programmed sinlessness I can allow them to live forever, never experiencing any pain or sickness.

But as you think about this further you realize that this approach would not be the best way. Creating a family of people without the freedom of choice would be like creating a race of robots, programmed to obey. How much better to have a creation that loves and obeys out of willing hearts? Thus you determine that **freedom of choice** is a necessity for your new family.

As you consider the various possibilities, you gradually develop the essential requirements for the best possible results. This would include:

- A plan that is kind and loving.
- A plan that provides for freedom of choice.
- A plan that teaches your children the difference between right and wrong through first hand experience.
- A plan that provides an opportunity to **live forever in perfect happiness.**
- A plan that results in your children loving you, not because they have no choice, but for what you are, and for what you have provided for them.

This is the Plan of God that He provided for His new human family. It is the most loving, just and reasonable Plan for mankind that could ever be imagined!

OVERVIEW OF GOD'S PLAN!

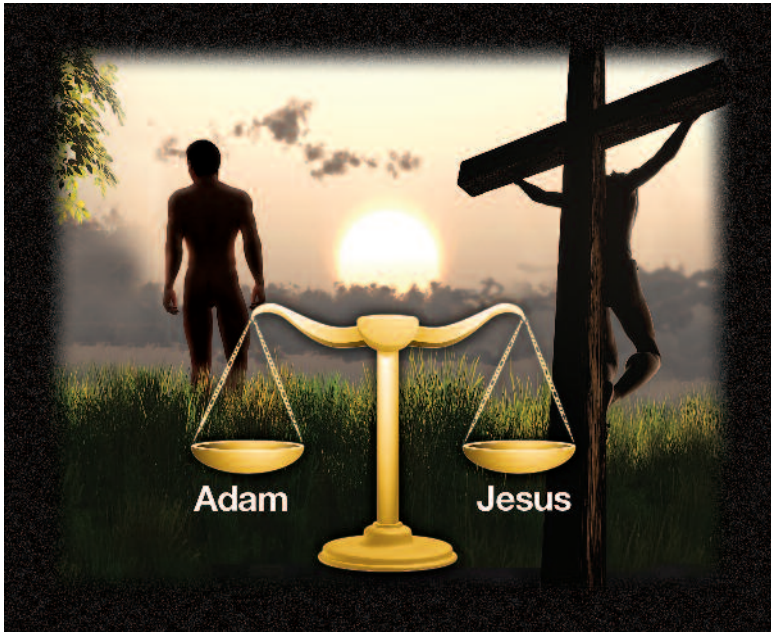
When God created Adam in the Garden of Eden, He gave Adam a simple test: obey and live, or disobey and die. God knew that Adam would fail this test, simply because he had no previous experience with disobedience and its consequences. This may not sound reasonable on God's part. But in reality it was an act of love, an act that would be for man's ultimate blessing. God determined that for man's highest eternal welfare mankind must learn the value of right over wrong. The best way for man to thoroughly learn this was to experience the end result of sin. Because of Adam's original sin, all of his posterity has likewise experienced

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the consequences of sin. We have now tasted its bitter results — sickness, pain, suffering, sorrow and death.

But now consider why God's Wisdom and Love permitted this to happen. The Scriptures promise every single person who has ever lived will be raised from the sleep of death in God's promised Kingdom. (John 5:28, 29) This awakening will be spread out over time. Gradually the whole race of mankind will come back to life. As we read in 1 Corinthians 15:22, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall ALL be made alive." Notice, **all** will be made alive. This includes every man, woman and child that has ever lived! There is no qualification in the Apostle's words. He says that **all** will be made alive, whether Christian or Atheist, Jew or Arab, Hindu or Buddhist, good or bad, **all** are promised to be raised from the dead in God's Kingdom.

Because the one perfect man Adam sinned, justice required the death penalty to come upon him and all his posterity. However, God's love provided for another perfect man, Christ Jesus, to give his life as a "Ransom" to redeem father Adam. (Ransom in Greek is Anti-lutron meaning a corresponding price. That is a perfect life for a perfect life.) As a result, the merit of Jesus' Ransom sacrifice provides the legal basis for God's justice to be satisfied. The payment of this ransom price will allow everyone who has ever lived to be released from condemnation and be raised from the dead.



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1 Timothy 2:4 confirms that Jesus' ransom covers **all**, and that **all** will live again. It says that God "**will have all men to be saved**, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

Notice the scripture states that first of all God "**will have all men to be saved.**" This does not mean that all will be eternally saved. Eternal salvation will depend upon their progress during the Kingdom. Their initial salvation will consist of being raised from the dead.

Secondly, after coming to life again, they will "come unto the knowledge of the truth" of God's Plan. This knowledge will include the **opportunity and requirements to obtain eternal salvation.** It will be dependent upon obeying Kingdom guidelines and gradually developing their characters until they attain to perfect love.

TWO SALVATIONS

The key to understanding God's ultimate plan for His human creation is to recognize that the Scriptures teach that there are two distinct salvations for mankind – a Heavenly and an Earthly.

HEAVENLY SALVATION SCRIPTURES

- "First resurrection...shall be priests of God and Christ."
Revelation 20:6
- "We shall be like him." 1 John 3:2
- "Partakers of the heavenly calling." Hebrews 3:1
- "Saints shall judge the world." 1 Corinthians 6:2
- "We shall bear the image of the heavenly."
1 Corinthians 15:49
- "Partakers of the divine nature." 2 Peter 1:4

EARTHLY SALVATION SCRIPTURES

- "Earth abideth forever." Ecclesiastes 1:4
- "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth."
Matthew 6:10
- "When judgments are in the earth,...world will learn righteousness." Isaiah 26:9
- "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory." Psalm 72:19
- "He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."
Ephesians 1:10
- "Earth hath he given to children of men." Psalm 115:16
- "Earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord."
Isaiah 11:9

- “Every knee should bow, of things in heaven and which are on earth.” Philippians 2:10
- “His flesh shall become fresher than a child’s.” Job 33:22-25

The past two thousand years since Jesus’ death have been for the purpose of selecting and developing a Heavenly class. This elect class is comprised of those who in this present life dedicate themselves to live a life of total commitment to serve our God supremely. If faithful, they will be raised to “glory, honor, and immortality,” in Heaven above, as “joint-heirs” with Christ (Romans 2:7, Revelation 3:21, Romans 8:17).

Our Lord refers to these faithful ones as a “Little Flock,” that is, relatively few in number (Luke 12:32). Note how Revelation 20:6 refers to the position and purpose of this saintly class. “They shall be **priests** of God and of Christ and shall **reign** with him a thousand years.” Who will they be reigning over as priests and kings? They will serve as priests and kings to instruct, bless, and govern all the rest of mankind in the earthly phase of God’s Kingdom.

The saints ruling with Jesus will comprise the “new heavens” that 2 Peter 3:13 refers to. This Heavenly class will replace the present “heavens” of Satan’s spiritual rulership. Together with Christ, this Heavenly class will be the spiritual instructors who will



bless mankind that will be dwelling in the righteous conditions of the new earthly society.

It is to this earthly kingdom that **all** the remainder of mankind — good and bad — will be raised during the 1,000 year Millennial Kingdom of God. As each one is raised from the dead, they will be guided and instructed in the laws of God. They will have every opportunity to reform from their sins and develop a righteous character in the image of God. At the end of the 1,000 years they will each be given a final test of obedience.

By that time, all mankind will have experienced the great **contrast** between the consequences of **disobedience** in the present life, and the blessings of **obedience** in the 1,000 year Kingdom. The old adage that “experience is the best teacher” will be proved to be true. The contrast of experience with evil — then with good — will enable most of mankind to pass their individual test and go on to live forever in perfect happiness. The Bible describes this work as “restitution” to man’s former estate of perfection. (Acts 3:19, 21)

There will be a few, however, even after every possible help is given, who will refuse to develop love in their hearts for God and their fellow man. At the end of the 1,000 years, in a “little season” (Revelation 20:3), they will each be given a final, individual, test of obedience which will expose any rebellious hearts. Because they would not be able to function in a perfect just and loving society, they will be mercifully removed in what the Bible calls “second death” (Revelation 20:14) with no hope of a future resurrection.

Thus, the Plan God adopted for His human creation will result in most all of mankind loving and obeying their Creator for all eternity, not because they had no choice, but because it will be the desire of their hearts. The Apostle Paul beautifully describes man’s attitude of heart when he says that, “God will be everything to everyone” (1 Corinthians 15:28 RSV).

Then will be fulfilled the words of Philippians 2:10, 11. “At the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth,...and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (NAS).

WHAT GOD'S EARTHLY KINGDOM WILL BE LIKE

With this summary of God’s overall plan, let us now note a few of the many scriptures that describe the blessings of what the Earthly Kingdom of God will be like:



In **ISAIAH 35:1-10** we are promised:

The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.
Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened.
And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.
Then will the lame, leap like a deer.
And the mute tongue will shout for joy.
Water will gush forth in the wilderness.
And the ransomed of the LORD will return.
They will enter Zion with singing.
Everlasting joy will crown their heads.
Gladness and joy will overtake them.
And sorrow and sighing will flee away.

ISAIAH 11:6 NIV — “The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.”

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ISAIAH 11:9 — “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [Kingdom], for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD [Jehovah], as the waters cover the sea.”

MICAH 4:3, 4 NIV — “They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Every man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the LORD Almighty has spoken.”

ISAIAH 25:7-9 RSV — “He will destroy on this mountain [or Kingdom] the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken. It will be said in that day, ‘Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.’”

Swords into Plowshares Sculpture, United Nations, New York.

Photograph: David Paul Ohmer. Used by permission.





Now we can understand more clearly what Haggai 2:6-8 referred to when it prophesied, “And the desire of all nations shall come!” After the shaking trouble of Armageddon, truly, “the desire of all nations shall come” in God’s glorious Kingdom!

THE BIBLE HELL – NOT ETERNAL TORMENT

At this point some may say, “this sounds wonderful but it almost sounds too good to be true.” Some teach that if one accepts Christ now and lives a relatively good life, they will go to heaven when they die. But if one does not accept Christ in this life, or lives a bad life, they will go to Hell, where they will be tormented forever.

You can rest assured that this is **not** what the Bible teaches. It is **not** what a loving Heavenly Father would do to His erring children. Eternal torment is a belief caused by mistranslations of the original Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. It originated in the Dark Ages by overzealous theologians. Unfortunately, human reasoning entered the picture! They felt that surely God must treat differently those who live a good life from those who live an evil life. Perhaps

they were well intentioned considering it a motivator to encourage righteous living. But the mistranslation completely misrepresents the character of our loving Creator and His plan for mankind.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for “hell” is *sheol*. In the Greek New Testament, the equivalent word for “hell” is *hades*. If we examine **all** references in the Bible to the words *sheol* and *hades*, we will see that it cannot refer to a place of eternal torment. These words do not refer to a place at all. They refer to a condition — the condition of death. Death is the cessation of life. In death there is no consciousness. In this respect, it is likened to a sleep into which all mankind go, awaiting the resurrection.

THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ILLUSTRATE THIS POINT:

- In the Old Testament, the original Hebrew word *sheol* is used 65 times. However, when the translators rendered *sheol* into English, they were very inconsistent.

- It was translated grave 31 times; hell 31 times and pit 3 times. When it was a righteous person who died, it was translated he went into the “**grave.**” When it was an unrighteous person who died it was translated he went into “**hell.**” However in the original Hebrew, everyone whether righteous or unrighteous went to *sheol*. They simply ceased to live. They went into the condition of death. The scriptures describe the dead as being without thought or consciousness. “His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth: in that very day his thoughts perish” (Psalms 146:4).

- Ecclesiastes 9:10 (NAS) also describes the condition of *sheol*. “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in *sheol* where you are going.” Notice how this describes the condition of *sheol* as a condition of death, unconsciousness, into which every-one goes.

- The life of righteous Job gives a similar insight into the use of the word *sheol*. “There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man” (Job 1:8, NAS). In the account, Job became very ill. Filled with great sorrow and much physical pain, he prayed for God to allow him to die. He wanted to sleep in death until God would raise him again in the resurrection. He prayed, “**O that you would hide me in *sheol*,** That you would conceal me until your wrath returns to you...if a man dies, will he live again?...You will call, and I will answer” (Job 14:13-15, NAS). Job recognized that *sheol* would give him relief and rest from his suffering. He wanted to wait in the grave until the time of his resurrection.

From these Scriptures it is clear that *sheol* could not refer to a place of eternal torment. If all people good and bad go there and righteous Job (a prophet of God) actually prayed to go there, surely it must refer to something very different than a place of eternal torment. The reality is that it simply refers to the condition of death, unconsciousness, a condition likened to sleep. It is a state from which all will be awakened in God's glorious Kingdom of blessings.

SIGNS OF THE END OF THE AGE

The exciting prospect of God's kingdom causes us to wonder, "when will this resurrection take place and the Kingdom be established?" The disciples asked Jesus this very question in the 24th chapter of Matthew. They asked, "Tell us, Master, when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy presence and the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3)

Jesus proceeded to give his disciples evidences that would enable those who were watching to recognize when this time would be near. He said in Matthew 24:21, 22, "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved."

TROUBLE AS NEVER BEFORE

We might wonder how trouble could be a special sign to indicate the nearness of His Kingdom. For there has always been trouble somewhere in the world. The answer is found in the last part of the verse quoted above. Jesus said, "**And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved.**"

Recall for a moment the devastation that took place in Hiroshima Japan on August 6, 1945. From one atomic bomb dropped over the city, more than 200,000 people died and countless others suffered radiation burns. By today's standards, that bomb was relatively small. Its destructive power was the equivalent of exploding 13,000 tons of TNT. On October 30, 1961, Russia exploded a test Hydrogen bomb that had the equivalent of **50 million tons of TNT**. That is 3,846 times greater explosive power than the one bomb on Hiroshima!

In 2012 there were eight confirmed countries that had nuclear warheads: China, England, France, India, Pakistan, North Korea,

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Russia, and the United States. There are currently about 31,000 nuclear warheads owned by these eight countries. The combined explosive yield of these weapons is approximately **5 billion** tons of TNT. That's 200,000 times greater than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

We can see the fulfillment of Jesus' sign of the end of the age when he said, "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" (Matthew 24:22). Never before in the history of man would it have been possible to destroy all life on earth. Today there are enough nuclear weapons to destroy all flesh on earth many times over. How thankful we are that God has promised that the trouble will be shortened. It is most reassuring to know that the purpose of the trouble is to remove Satan's present evil order, and that following the trouble it will be replaced with the new righteous government and social structure of God's Kingdom.

ADDITIONAL SIGNS IN DANIEL

In the Book of Daniel God gave us additional signs to know where we are on the stream of time. Daniel 12:1: "At that time shall Michael stand up...and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." We again see reference to a great time of trouble like never before. But note what comes immediately after the trouble. "At that time



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thy people shall be delivered, **Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake**" (Daniel 12:2, NIV). Here we see another prophetic indication that following the trouble of Armageddon the resurrection of the dead will begin!

Then, in Daniel 12:4 God gives us two more signs to help identify when this time of trouble would be that would precede the Kingdom. God tells the prophet Daniel that it was not going to be in his day, but in "**the time of the end.**" He says, "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: **many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.**"

KNOWLEDGE SHALL BE INCREASED

We have witnessed the fulfillment of both of these signs indicating we are in "the time of the end."

Think for a moment of how fast knowledge is increasing. The accumulated knowledge of mankind up to the year 1750 AD had doubled by the year 1900, a period of 150 years. It redoubled again in just 50 years by 1950, again in 10 years by 1960, and again in 8 years by 1968. Now, it is increasing so fast that today the amount of information and knowledge in the world is doubling every 18 months. IBM predicts that in the next couple of years, information will double every 11 hours!



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It is difficult to comprehend this rate of growth but think of the countless inventions that have taken place in just a little over 100 years: the telephone, electric light, automobiles, sound recording, radio, television, jet airplanes, modern appliances, computers, space travel, trips to the moon, cell phones. Changes are occurring so rapidly that most of us cannot keep up. Now, wonder of wonders, we have the global Internet with information available from any part of the world instantly. With the press of a button, we gain access to information regarding virtually any subject or product under the sun. Another marvel is how we can now get precise travel directions via GPS Satellite navigation. This “increase of knowledge” was one of the signs Daniel gave us of the nearness of God’s Kingdom.

MANY SHALL RUN TO AND FRO

The increase of knowledge made possible the next sign Daniel gave us in Daniel 12:4. “Many shall run to and fro!” Are we running to and fro today? Think for a moment how for thousands of years man’s common transportation was a horse and buggy. How dramatically that has

changed in recent times. Sir Isaac Newton was scorned by his peers when he predicted that man would some day travel at speeds of 50 miles per hour. Little did he realize that man would fly across the ocean at supersonic speeds, exceeding 1,300



mph, and travel through space at 25,000 mph. “Many shall run to and fro” — this is certainly our day! Another evidence that we are on the very brink of the establishment of God’s Kingdom!

THE FIG TREE — ISRAEL TO SPRING TO LIFE

In Matthew 24:32-34, Jesus gave another very important sign. “Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender

and putteth forth leaves ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily, I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.” From many other scriptures throughout the Bible we learn that the fig tree represents the nation of Israel (Jeremiah 24:1-10; 29:17-23; Luke 13:6-9). Leaves sprouting on a tree are a sign that the tree has sprung to life after a dormant winter.

Thus, Jesus was actually telling us that when we see Israel come alive as a nation (after being without a homeland for nearly 2,000 years) then we will know that God’s Kingdom is right at the door.

Has Israel put forth leaves? Yes, most definitely. After the Roman conquest, Israelites as a people were dispersed among all nations, often persecuted bitterly, having to live in Ghettos, then hunted and exterminated as undesirables. Yet Israel’s hope was strong in God’s promises of a return to their homeland. “Next year in Jerusalem” was their cry of hope. This hope was fulfilled in one of the great miracles of our day. The fig tree, Israel, put forth leaves in **May 1948** when once again she became a nation after thou-

sands of years without a homeland. No other nation has ever done this!

By all military standards, Israel should not be in existence today. In war after war, outnumbered 100 to 1, the tiny Israeli forces could not be overpowered. It is clear that God’s time clock has struck for Israel to return to their land. The Fig Tree has blossomed! Remember this was a sign that Jesus gave to show the nearness of his kingdom.



OTHER NATIONS TO SPRING TO LIFE

Luke adds something in his account that makes our faith even stronger. Luke 21:29-31: “Behold the fig tree, **and all the trees**; When they shoot forth, you see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.” Notice — that Luke adds “**and all the trees.**”

If the Fig Tree pictures Israel, “all the trees” would refer to other nations. Luke is telling us that together with Israel springing to life, many other nations would put forth leaves, sprouting into existence. When we see this happen, we would know that the Kingdom of God is near.

What does history tell us? For many centuries up to 1945, the number of independent nations in the world had remained relatively constant at around 70. However, since 1945 the number of independent nations has grown dramatically to 196 nations! More than 126 new independent nations have sprung into being that were previously held as colonies. It ties in closely with the time that Israel became a nation in 1948.



AFTER ARMAGEDDON

Thus Israel, simultaneously with 126 other nations, has put forth leaves, sprouting into existence! Remember what Luke and Matthew said, “When ye see these things come to pass, know ye the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand” (Luke 21:31). “When ye shall see all these things know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled” (Matthew 24:33, 34). What a thrill to our hearts! This means that we are on the very brink of the greatest event in all human history — the establishment of God’s Kingdom!

FOUR UNIVERSAL WORLD EMPIRES

But if this is so, why all the continued trouble? This is again in fulfillment of prophecy. For just as a contractor must remove an old structure from a building site before he can build a new skyscraper, so with God. He must first remove Satan’s present corrupt systems before they can be replaced with His Kingdom of blessings.

In Daniel 2:31-35 Daniel interpreted a prophetic dream of the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar. It pictured four empires that have dominated the world and their removal — Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome.

“You saw, O king, a great image...The head of this image was of fine gold [Babylon],...its breast and arms of silver [Medo-Persia]...its belly and thighs of bronze [Greece], and its legs of iron



[the Roman Empire, East and West], its feet partly of iron and partly of clay [picturing the Church-State systems of Europe with the ten toes symbolizing the nations of Christendom].”

“As you looked, a stone was cut out without human hands, and it smote the image on its feet of iron and clay, **and broke them in pieces, and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found.** Then the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth” (Daniel 2:31-35 RSV).

This prophetic dream is another picture of the removal of Satan’s present corrupt systems — the symbolic heavens and earth — and replacing them with God’s Kingdom that will fill the whole earth with blessings.

TIME ELEMENT OF REMOVAL OF EARTH’S KINGS

Daniel continues his prophecy giving us the clue **to the time element of when the image would be struck.**

“**In the days of these kings,** shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. And that kingdom shall not be left to other people but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it will stand forever” (Daniel 2:44). The kings referred to in this prophecy are the Monarchies of the old vestiges of the Roman Empire pictured by the legs and feet of Nebuchadnezzar’s image.

The year **1914** is a recognized turning point in human history and corresponds exactly to the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy. If ever there was a year that marked the end of an era and the beginning of another, it was 1914. It marked the ending of an old world as World War One resulted in removing the **Monarchies of Europe** and began the disintegration of their colonies.

Thus the time element of when the image was **struck** had to be while the kings were **still on the scene (1914)**, for the Kings of Europe virtually passed away as a result of the First World War.

This marks 1914 as the time element of the smiting of the image in Daniel’s prophecy: “**In the days of these kings,** shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom...it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it will stand forever.” The breaking down process of God’s Kingdom power began there in 1914, and will continue until all the kingdoms are consumed in Armageddon

As we have seen in the other prophecies of the end times that we considered, the trouble pictured in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream

is followed immediately by God's Kingdom. "The stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth, **and it [God's Kingdom] will stand forever**" (Daniel 2:35 RSV).

ENVISION GOD'S KINGDOM!

As we see God's prophecies being fulfilled before our very eyes it thrills our hearts to realize that we are on the very brink of the blessings promised in God's Kingdom.



CLOSE YOUR EYES

for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your

mental vision the glory of the perfect earth.

Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act.

There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay, not even the fear of such things.

Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness.

The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realize the resurrection work complete.

GOD'S KINGDOM

As we envision these final results of God's eternal purpose, we thank and praise God as we realize that His Plan is truly the most loving, the most just, the most blessed and reasonable plan for mankind that could ever be imagined.

God's promises awaiting mankind are beautifully summarized in the closing verses of Revelation. They show us that Armageddon is not the end. It is only the necessary prelude to the New Heavens and Earth — the most glorious time, awaiting everyone that has ever lived! God's Kingdom!

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. 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” (Revelation 21:4, 5).

***The Desire of all nations will have come —
and it will last forever!***

