



## A THOUSAND YEARS OF PEACE

### QUEST LESSON E-11

**The Problem:** The leading nations of earth today all declare that they want a permanent peace. Yet they go on preparing for war. Each nation is afraid of what others will do unless there are sufficient nuclear weapons to deter them. We are confronted by the remarkable paradox of national leaders pleading for peace, while involving themselves in the most expensive arms race in history. Thinking people everywhere are convinced that such a build up of arms can only result eventually in the most destructive war this world has ever known.

If we carefully observe the precedents of history, we will come to the conclusion that the development of trust between the nations, sufficient to bring about peaceful international co-operation, is probably an unrealistic dream. When in history has it happened? The existence of military arms has usually resulted in the decision to use them. And it is not at all difficult for nations to justify their bellicose policies based on economic necessity, ideological commitment, the need for national defense against a potential aggressor, or some other plausible motivation.

Ordinary people just want peace, freedom from fear, the privilege of conducting their lives in an atmosphere of trust and social well-being. They want to be able to work, buy, sell, worship, and play without the dreadful threat of annihilation because a group of power-hungry political leaders, in the interests of national or ideological ambition, threaten to engulf the world in destruction.

But what hope is there for the aspirations of ordinary peace-loving citizens to be realized? Can the man in the street change the mental set of leaders all over the world? Jesus foresaw the problem and offered no hope of its being solved in this world. He predicted: "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in diverse places."

We have seen in the immediately preceding studies that, as we near the end of time, there is also to be a great religious persecution. Adherents of false religion, who call themselves Christian, will unite to urge governments to pass decrees against the faithful people of God.

Bible prophecy tells us that the world will experience increasing chaos until the second coming of Jesus. What will happen then? We are assured that then there will be peace for those who love Christ. Some interpreters think that the millennium will be 1,000 years of peace on this earth. The word "millennium" is not a Bible word; it simply refers to the coming 1,000 years of peace that the Bible predicts. Those who believe that Christ will come at the end of the millennium are called postmillennialists. They look for the international situation in our world to become increasing better, with more and more trust developing between the nations, until we will have 1,000 years of peace and prosperity followed by the second coming of Jesus.

Another group refers to themselves as premillennialists. They believe that Christ will come at the beginning of the millennium. Most of them believe that Jesus will come down to earth and reign here for 1,000 years. So there will be 1,000 years of peace on earth before the eternal Kingdom is finally established.

Other premillennialists are convinced that Jesus will not reign on earth immediately after His second advent, but will take the saved to heaven where they can enjoy 1,000 years of peace.

Which of these views does the Bible teach? We don't want to believe anything just because some leading scholar says it is so. We want to know for ourselves what the Bible has to say. That is the only safe course. In fact, the Bible warns us, "If

they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). So our concern is to test every belief by the Bible. Let us turn to the sacred volume and see what it says about the millennium.

## Objectives

First, what happens at the beginning of the millennium? Second, where are Earth's inhabitants during the millennium?

Third, what is the nature of the judgment during the millennium?

Fourth, what happens at the end of the millennium?

### I. What Happens At The Beginning Of The Millennium?

The 1,000 years of peace begin with the most devastating war in history. Only after that will God's faithful people enjoy the contentment they are looking for.

## The Word

1. What terrible war will usher in the 1,000 years? Revelation 17:14; 19:11-16.
2. Who are destroyed in this war? Revelation 19:17-21; 6:14-17.
3. Who are raised from the dead at this time? 1 Thessalonians 4:16.
4. What is the name given to this resurrection at the second coming of Jesus? Revelation 20:6.
5. What happens at that time to the living who are faithful servants of Christ? 1 Thessalonians 4:17.
6. What is done to Satan at that time? Revelation 20:1-3.
7. How long do the lost remain dead after the second coming of Jesus? Revelation 20:5.

Explanation: The war at the second coming of Jesus is between the armies of earth and the armies of heaven. This is the battle of Armageddon that brings earth's history to a close (Revelation 16:14,16). The unfaithful peoples of earth, who have chosen to follow Satan's counterfeit religion, instead of the religion of Christ, are totally destroyed in that great battle. Christ comes with all the angels of heaven (Matthew 25:31), and the unbelievers cannot bear to look into His face. The glory of His presence is so intense that they are destroyed by it (2 Thessalonians 1: 10). In this great destruction of God's enemies the "beast" and the "false prophet" are finally annihilated. These are the false religious forces that have united the world against the faithful people of God. (See Lesson E-5). The living wicked who are put to death, and those who had previously died unbelievers remain in their graves for 1,000 years after the second coming of Jesus (Revelation 20:5).

While unbelievers are being very rapidly put to death all over the world, the experience of God's people will be quite different. The faithful dead will be raised at that time (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Jesus explained what will happen to them. "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:31). The elect are those who have retained their faith in Christ. The resurrected dead are caught up by the angels to meet Jesus who is waiting for them in the sky. This is called the "first resurrection" (Revelation 20:6). Then the living, who by Christ's grace were able to resist the demands of the beast and the image to the beast, are also caught up by the angels, and united with Christ and the resurrected dead in the sky.

Then Christ binds Satan so that he cannot tempt anyone for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:1-3). How could He tempt anyone, when there is no one left to tempt? The wicked are all dead, and the saints are all with Christ. So Satan is bound down here on this desolate earth unable to harm anyone. The "bottomless pit" mentioned in Revelation 20:3 translates the Greek word *abussos*. This is the word used in the Greek Old Testament to describe the desolate state of the earth at the beginning of creation week (Genesis 1:2; the word "deep"). As it is used in the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) the word *abussos* usually refers to large accumulations of water. Often the "deep" or "abyss" resulted from the judgments of God being poured out upon the wicked. For example, when the great flood came in Noah's day, the fountains of the "great deep" were broken up, and the world was destroyed by water. (Compare 2 Peter 3:5-6). This word (*abussos*) very

appropriately describes the state of the world right after the second coming of Jesus. In fact, Peter emphasized that everything on earth will be destroyed. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in 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" (2 Peter 3:10).

So the second coming of Jesus will reduce the world to a state of total destruction, and Satan will be forced to remain here for 1,000 years, amid the scene that his rebel lion created. None of earth's misery, including sickness, death, war, and pain, would ever have occurred if Satan had not rebelled against God. His unfaithfulness made it necessary for him to be put out of heaven (Revelation 1:7-9). Now "his mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate" (Psalm 16). And his hosts of demons will keep him company on this desolate earth for 1,000 years. "Their work of tempting and attacking God's people will forever come to an end, and they will suffer the intense misery of isolation with no escape for their evil powers.

Relevance: Are you ready for these events? Are you preparing for the second coming of Jesus? That is a question we all must ask ourselves as we continue this study.

## II. Where Are Earth's Inhabitants During The Millennium?

We have already seen that the wicked of earth are all put to death at the second coming of Jesus, which takes place at the beginning of the millennium. Hence, we know where they are during the 1,000 years. They are dead on this earth. But where are God's faithful people?

### The Word

8. Where did Jesus promise to take His faithful people when He comes the second time? John 14:1-3.
9. Where did Jesus urge us to lay up treasure? Matthew 6:20.
10. Where did John see the saved immediately after the coming of Jesus? Revelation 7:9-15; 14:3, 5.
11. Where are God's temple and throne? Revelation 4:1-2; 11:19; 15:5.
12. On what did John see the saved sitting? Revelation 20:4.
13. What does Jesus promise to the one who, by His grace, overcomes sin? Revelation 3:21.
14. Where is Christ's throne immediately after His second advent? Revelation 7:15, 17.

Explanation: The Scriptural evidence is very clear that, immediately after His second advent, Jesus takes the saved to heaven. Since there are many people who believe that the millennium will be on this earth, it is necessary for us to take a very close look at what the Bible says on this subject. We can outline the Scriptural explanation as follows:

1. After His resurrection, Jesus explained to His disciples that He was going back to heaven, where He would prepare a place for them (John 14:1-3). Since He promised to take them there when He returned, we conclude that the saints will be there during the millennium.
2. Jesus urged His followers to "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:20). The statement would be a strange one if the saints were not to be taken there.
3. In vision, John saw the saved of all ages, immediately after the second advent, before the throne of God in His temple (Revelation 7:9-15; 14:3, 5). We are told very clearly that God's temple, which contains His throne, is in heaven (Revelation 4:1-2; 11:19; 15:5). So, John saw the saved in heaven.
4. Right after the advent, John saw the saved sitting on thrones (Revelation 20:4). Where are those thrones? On this earth or in heaven? Jesus had previously promised that the overcomer "will sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Revelation 3:21). Where is Christ's throne immediately after the second advent? It is in heaven. "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters" (Revelation 7:15). The Lamb is Christ, and the throne is

the one in the heavenly temple (verse 15). Hence, Christ's throne is in heaven, and His faithful, saved people are sitting on thrones in the heavenly temple.

Relevance: The saved of all ages will enjoy the 1,000 years of peace in heaven after the second coming of Jesus. There is no millennium on this earth. The only inhabitants of this earth, in its desolate state after the advent, are Satan and his demons. All the lost are in the grave, and all the saved are in heaven.

### III. What Is The Nature Of The Judgment During The Millennium?

The Bible explains what the saints are doing in heaven for those 1,000 years.

#### The Word

15. What work is given to the saved in heaven during the millennium? Revelation 20:4.
16. What did Jesus say His followers would be doing right after His advent? Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30.
17. What did Paul say the saints would be doing after the second advent? 1 Corinthians 6:2-3.
18. What records are used in this heavenly judgment during the millennium? Revelation 20:12.
19. On what basis are the wicked dead judged during the millennium? Revelation 20:13, 15.

Explanation: During the millennium in heaven, the saved of all ages will be sitting on thrones judging. Jesus said they will judge "the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28). Paul said they will "judge the world" (1 Corinthians 6:2), and angels (verse 3). Undoubtedly he means fallen angels, who had been cast out of heaven with Satan (Revelation 12:9).

The "great white throne" judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) undoubtedly takes place at the end of the millennium. (Compare Matthew 25:31-46). It is then that God will put into effect the decisions made by the heavenly court during the millennium. But the passage makes it clear on what basis the lost have been judged. During the millennium the saved are sitting on thrones in heaven looking into the records of lost people's lives. These records are kept in the heavenly books. Since Jesus put the living wicked to death at His advent, and did not raise the wicked who had died previously, it is clear that the decision to exclude them from heaven had been made previously. This decision was made during the pre-advent judgment (Daniel 7:9-14; see lesson E-7). The purpose of the judgment during the millennium is not to change the verdict of the pre-advent judgment. That was a divine decision that stands for eternity.

Then why are the saved looking into the records of the lost during the millennium? Suppose you are one of the saved in heaven and one of your loved ones is not. Wouldn't you want to be thoroughly certain that that dear one had been treated with complete justice? One of the reasons for the great controversy between good and evil in the first place was that God's love and justice were questioned by Satan and his angels. The Lord does not want sin to appear in the universe ever again. He does not want anyone to question His love and justice at any time in the eternal ages to follow. That is why He allows the saved to look into the records that were used by the pre-advent court, so that they can verify the findings of that court and be absolutely sure that God has handled everyone with the same infinite degree of love and justice.

Relevance: What a God of love we have. He gave His Son to die for our sins (John 3:16). He forgives us willingly because of Calvary (1 John 1:9). He does all He can to keep us from sinning (dude 24). What more can a loving God do than our Lord has done for us? When He takes the saved to heaven, He wants them to discover how faithful He has been to the commitment of giving every human soul the same opportunity to be saved. God is not arbitrary; He loves all equally. And when He conducts a judgment, as He will during BS millennium, it is always done with perfect fairness to all.

### IV. What Happens At The End Of The Millennium?

The events that will occur at the end of the millennium will bring the great controversy between good and evil to an end.

#### The Word

20. How is Satan "loosed out of his prison" at the end of the millennium? Revelation 20:7-8; compare verse 5.
21. What does Satan persuade the resurrected lost to do? Revelation 20:9 (first part).
22. How did the holy city, New Jerusalem, happen to be on this earth? Revelation 21:2.
23. What scene occurs after the lost have surrounded the holy city? Revelation 20:11-13; Matthew 25:31-46.
24. What then happens to Satan and the hosts of the lost? Revelation 20:9-10, 14-15.
25. What does God do to the earth? Where will Christ and the saved live from then on? Revelation 21:1, 3-5.

Explanation: At the end of the millennium Satan is loosed from his prison by the raising of the wicked dead. For 1,000 years he was confined to the desolate earth with no one to tempt. Now the lost hosts of the dead, who have been in their graves throughout the millennium, are raised (Revelation 20:5, 8). These myriads of lost are called "Gog and Magog." In Ezekiel 38 and 39, Gog the king of Magog, is the symbolic name given to the great enemy God's people after their period of captivity in Babylon, when once again they would be enjoying prosperity and the blessings of God. The Lord promised to protect His people from Gog if they would be faithful to Him. Unfortunately, the chosen people were not faithful, and kings from the north were permitted to come again and reduce them to a captive state. In the situation at the end of the millennium, however, the Lord's faithful people are with Him in the holy city, New Jerusalem, and the lost hosts, represented by Gog and Magog, are unable to harm them.

The New Jerusalem, containing Christ and the saved of all ages, comes down from heaven and rests on this earth (Revelation 21:2). Then Satan stirs up the hosts of lost humanity to attack the city. He organizes them into the mightiest human army of all time, and they surround the holy city with the intention of taking it. At that point comes the judgment of the "great white throne" (Revelation 20:11-13). Through the millennium the saved in heaven have been looking into the records of the lives of the lost. They have confirmed that God is perfectly loving and just, and that His decisions regarding every soul have been completely fair. Now the wicked, whose sins are still recorded against them, and whose names are not in the book of life (verse 15), are to hear the divine sentence and receive their just punishment for their evil works. Christ sits upon the throne of judgment, and each lost soul is reminded of the record of his life and given the reason for his punishment.

Then fire comes down from heaven and devours them (Revelation 20:9). The devil is punished more severely than any other because he is the great originator of evil who has deceived multitudes of lost angels and men. The Bible does not teach that the fire burns for eternity. The wicked are reduced to ashes. Their bodies once again become part of the chemical substance of the earth. Malachi wrote: "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven: and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch... And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes Under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 4:1, 3).

The earth is purified by fire, and then the Lord recreates it as it was in its perfect Edenic state (Revelation 21:1, 5). All traces of the curse of sin are removed, and the saved have the joy of inhabiting a magnificent earth made new. There is no more sin, death, sorrow, or pain, "for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

Relevance: You can have 1,000 years of perfect peace in heaven after the second coming of Jesus. You can have a place inside the New Jerusalem at the end of the millennium, 'instead of being among the degraded multitudes of lost outside the city. You can have the unimaginable thrill of inhabiting a glorious new earth. You can be an immortal being with a perfect mind and body, and a faultless spiritual relationship with the Lord. You can grow in spiritual power, in understanding and knowledge throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity, with scope for every noble ambition, and with never a bored or lonely moment. All things good may be yours! Why turn that down for the unsatisfying pleasures of sin in this life? Nothing that you have or could have now is worth keeping if it will cost you eternal life with Christ. The end of all things is upon us, and the Lord is calling you to make ready for the better land. Won't you right now bow your head in penitence and surrender to Christ, and receive His divine presence into your heart by the Holy Spirit? Tell Him you love Him, and that you want to live forever. And ask Him to be your Savior from sin.

## Review Questions

1. True or False

- a. The saved will be on this earth during the millennium.
  - b. After the second advent, the lost have another chance.
  - c. Only Satan and his demons will be on this earth during the millennium.
  - d. The wicked will be completely destroyed at the end of the millennium.
2. Discuss: How is Satan's experience during the millennium related to what happened to the scapegoat at the end of the Day of Atonement in the ancient Israelite sanctuary?