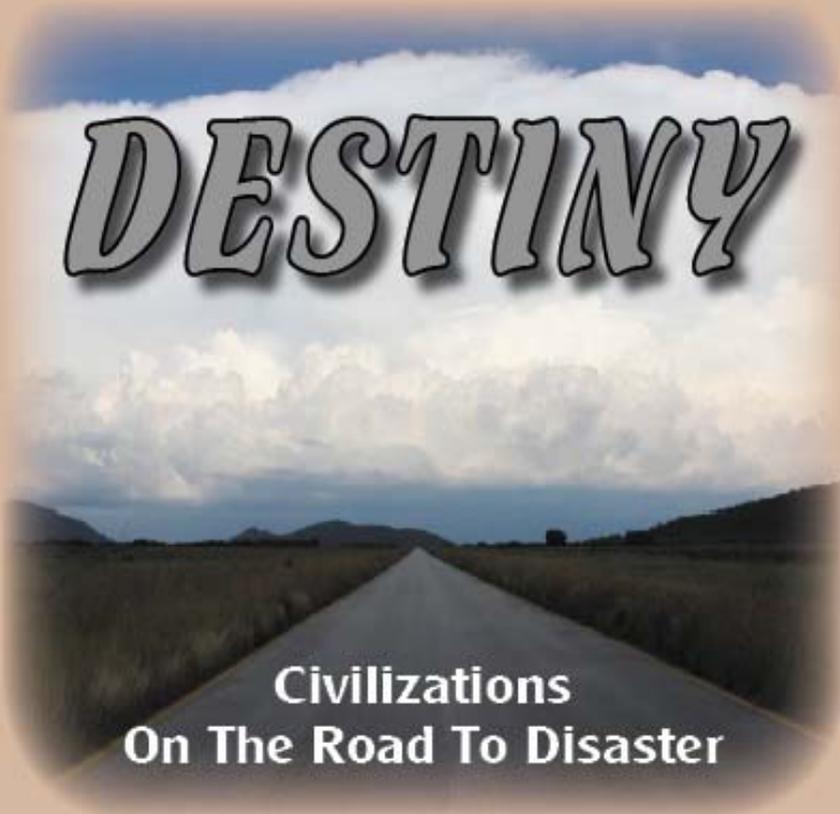


A CERTAIN



DESTINY

Civilizations
On The Road To Disaster

DICKSON

A Certain Destiny

Roger E. Dickson

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rdickson@mweb.co.za

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Preface

With every national disaster, there comes the accompanying fear that besets the general population. Two millennia ago the Christians in the city of Symrna were going into a social trauma over which they had no control. The words of comfort that King Jesus uttered to those Christians still holds true today: *“Do not fear those things that you will suffer”* (Rv 2:10).

In times of calamity it is often difficult to refrain from fear. Nevertheless, when our environment is in chaos, we must never forget that Jesus upholds all things by the word of His power (Hb 1:3). All things are under His control (Hb 2:8). If we fear, then we discover something about ourselves. John stated, *“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has torment. He who fears is not made perfect in love”* (1 Jn 4:17). National turmoil, or international pandemics, therefore, present the occasion for Christians to determine their faith in the King who has all things under His control. It may seem that things are sometimes out of control, but it is our faith that leads us fearlessly through times of despair.

This book was written in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic that has swept around the world. Civilization throughout the world has been brought to its knees in fear, and thus we have given up many of our freedoms to those who have pronounced mandates that are simply contrary to human habitation. Nevertheless, in the midst of such a pandemic, it is not the character of the Christian to fear. As Noah knew that there was a worldwide tragedy coming, he determined to walk as the Hebrew writer stated: *“By faith Noah, being warned by God of things not yet seen, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house”* (Hb 11:7). Noah’s “fear” of God was interpreted into obedience to do what God told him to do in preparation for something he had never experienced. His was not a fear of something that was transpiring at the time he built the ark. His fear of God meant that he believed that God would do what He said He would do, though while he was building, Noah never experienced that which was coming. Unfortunately, almost all people are in fear once a tragedy has come upon them. But because we walk by faith, this is not how our faith functions. Christians now are obedient in reference to the promised coming consummation of the present world when Jesus comes again. However, they do not walk in fear of any pandemics, or natural disasters, they might be enduring in the present. As Jesus reassured the Christians in Symrna, when future trials are yet to come, they will not fear.

It is my prayer that this book will aid the reader to understand how God has worked in this world. We study His past work in order to determine if He is continuing to work. Though we know that He has worked directly in causing either national or international calamity, at least we can understand that He is presently allowing Satan to go about and afflict the world. Therefore, whether a pandemic has been caused directly by God, or allowed to happen at the hand of Satan, we will continue to walk by faith without any fear concerning our destiny that is made sure by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

During the black death pandemic (bubonic plague) that transpired for five years in the middle of the fourteenth century, some cities in Europe would dig large holes in the ground outside the city. Because there were so many deaths during the night, the “dead collectors”—some believe this was the origin of the Grim Reaper fable—would go from house to house throughout the cities and towns to collect the dead who died during the night. They would then deposit the bodies of the dead in the large mass graves outside the city. They would throw the bodies in the large holes, and then cover them with a layer of dirt. The next morning of each day, they would do the same, until another large hole needed to be dug in the ground. It is estimated that about thirty percent of the population of Europe perished in the worst pandemic that has ever infected humanity.

In the face of questions by unbelievers, we have found that most Christians have very shallow answers for such pandemics. And because their reasoning is so shallow on such social tragedies, their understanding of Bible accounts of such matters have not yet graduated from children’s Bible school. We have found that few Christians even understand why God would bring a global flood on fathers, mothers, children and babies in order to annihilate from the face of the earth a past civilization. The inability of some to understand why God would do this to all but eight souls on the face of the earth during the generation of Noah, lends them to being inept in facing those who are skeptics concerning the historical accounts of the Bible. They are left philosophically defenseless in reference to defending their own faith..

It is not that God has left us void of the ability to reason concerning these matters. It is that we sometimes seek to maintain a “children’s Bible school” faith in a world of scientific unbelievers who have depended on their own national constitutions to establish moral law relationships of the citizenship of each nation of the world. In the face of those who have left God out of every statute of law, Christians often leave themselves without answers concerning wars and pandemics that have taken the lives of millions of people since time began.

Nevertheless, if we are to take ownership of our faith, then a faith that simply stands on a childlike belief of recorded history in the Bible will not answer the onslaught of questions that come our way from the unbelieving world of scientific atheists. We place ourselves in a position of mockery if we do not take our thinking concerning global tragedies beyond the security of church house walls.

In a time when the god of science has once again risen its head to supposedly solve all the problems of humanity that is in the depths of a pandemic, too many of us waffle in shallow answers that have no comforting reply for those who are indeed fearful of stepping outside their houses. In fact, they are so fearful that they would remain in voluntary “house arrest” for weeks in order to endure that which is simply against human nature. They would do such because they are more fearful of a virus that they cannot see, while arguing against the existence of a God they also cannot see, but is so evident in the world in which they live. They will believe in the sickness that is caused by an unseen virus while denying the heavens and earth that shout the existence of the unseen God. Paul would argue against them with the words, “*For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made*” (Rm 1:20).

But in such situations, it is time for Christians to step forward to give answers in reference to why they are Christians in the first place. As an example, and in the midst of a social trauma that was about to engulf the Jewish civilization at the end of the first century, the apostle Peter wrote a mandate to all Jewish Christians that they man-up to the responsibility of defending their faith: “*Be ready always to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you*” (1 Pt 3:15).

In those times of national despair in the first century, it was the responsibility of every Jewish Christian to assume his or her responsibility to defend his or her faith to unbelievers in view of the coming national tragedy of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. It is imperative that Christians today be likewise able to do the same in view of the present pandemic from which civilization is now suffering. If we do not do this, then we are not taking ownership of our faith. We

are not assuming our responsibility of giving hope to a world that is in the clutches of the Grim Reaper.

And if we are not taking ownership of our faith in times of national or international calamity, then we truly do not understand the motivation that the gospel inspires, especially in a time of despair. We assert, therefore, that unless we reveal the heart of God at a time of either local or international calamity, then we do not fully appreciate the incarnation of the Son of God into this world that has both morally and physically gone wrong. If we do not understand the inability of man to establish eternal moral laws to preserve humanity, then we will not understand the appeal of the gospel. If we do not understand the fact that this world is passing away, then we will not fully understand the hope that the Son of God offers to all humanity as He watches over this world as life slowly fades away. Therefore, read thoughtfully throughout the following chapters in order to be able to give hope to those who ask questions in these times of despair.

Chapter 1

PURGING THE EARTH

There is at least an inevitable truth that must be understood if we are going to understand our predicament as a human civilization. If we are Bible believers—we are sure you are—because of our faith we understand why we exist in a physical world, and particularly, as citizens of a human civilization that occasionally hits bumps along the road of human history. Because of the bumps, we are emotionally reminded of many Bible truths concerning our very existence. We are reminded because we are constantly faced with moral and physical attacks that are constantly launched against humanity as a whole. For this reason, we are thankful to God for these often traumatic reminders that He is still in control, and all is well.

Gullibly choking on the presumption of the philosophy of secular evolution just will not do. It will not do because such a godless philosophy of life leads humanity to relinquish to fate. Since theistic evolutionists seek to retain some religiosity about the world, they offer the assumption that we can, through the protection of our present environment, escape an inevitable consummation of all things in the last day. However, neither geological or biological evolutionists, in their presumption of uniformitarian theology, have any answers for the occasional apocalyptic physical and social phenomena that occasionally arises throughout history, and most recently, in the biological world of sicknesses that has presently inflicted humanity. Agnostics and atheists are simply without any answers for the physical or biological traumas that occasionally inflict humanity throughout history.

Therefore, assuming that many of us believe in the God of creation, and thus the recorded history of the Bible, then there is one truth upon which we must all agree. This truth is that the world, and its human citizenship, were created **only for the purpose of populating heaven**. We are here because He wants us to be there with Him throughout eternity. If we can come to a consensus on the truth of this proposition, then we can begin to make some sense out of those times in

human history when everything seemed to be in a state of self-destruction.

A. The world is fading away:

Reference to the second law of thermodynamics could at least give us a start in our quest to make some sense out of the present predicament of civilization. The second law of thermodynamics is a law of how the physical world functions. It is a law for which there are no contradictions in those physical laws that govern our environment. The law simply states that everything is running down. There is, therefore, no such thing as perpetual motion, for energy that is used can never be recovered and used again with the same force of its original use.

Since the second law of thermodynamics cannot be broken in reference to the present function of the physical world, then we must conclude that the physical universe is having its day, but eventually its day will be over. No environmental policy will delay this day. There will be a finality to the present physical environment of humanity. There is simply no such thing as eternity in reference to the physical universe. A match that has been lit can never be lit again. It cannot because such would be in violation of the second law of thermodynamics. Therefore, the universe, with its inhabitants, are “running out of gas,” and will subsequently not be refueled for the purpose for which either we, or it, were originally created. Once this present world has accomplished its purpose, then it will be time to move on to the next existence. If one is an atheist, then he will not be there when the present universe is gone. If one is a theist, then there is no cause for concern.

There will be no “relighting” of the universe, and thus, our environment for existence is headed for termination. Since this is true, and if we seek to continue beyond this present environment, then we must conclude that God has something else prepared for our eternal dwelling. This was certainly in the promise that Jesus made to His disciples: “*Let not your heart be troubled*” (Jn 14:1). They were not to be troubled in heart, because, Jesus promised, “*I go to prepare a place for you*” (Jn 14:2). By faith, therefore, regardless of our understanding of that place

which is in preparation for us, we will not harbor fearful hearts until we arrive therein.

B. Our purpose for being here:

With the preceding in mind, **we must conclude that this world, and the inhabitants thereon, were created for the purpose that the inhabitants of faith of this world are destined for a world that is beyond this world.** We were created for eternal dwelling in the presence of the only source of eternity, that is, **God.** We must conclude from this truth, therefore, that if civilization loses its purpose for which it was created for this environment, then humanity as a whole is in trouble. **If at any one time in the history of the world no candidates are produced for heavenly dwelling during any time of our existence on earth, then the world has lost its purpose for which it was originally created.** What good would be a world of people who have moved into their own moral self-destruction? In the biblical world view, a world of unrighteous citizens has lost its purpose for existence.

This presupposes, therefore, that the existence of the physical world is contingent upon the moral behavior of its inhabitants. If civilization loses its purpose of producing inhabitants who will transition beyond this world, then there would be no reason for the world as it is to continue. Since God would have no use for the continuation of the physical world past the total degradation of civilization, then we should be looking around for someone who is presently building an ark. At least, we should be *“looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God,”* and a *“new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells”* (2 Pt 3:12,13). Unfortunately, we have received no ark building plans from God, and thus we assume that what is in store for us is not something that would float a boat.

But before the inevitable moment of final termination is upon us, we could assume that there would be moments in human history when mankind would be on the brink of losing the very purpose for which God created this world. We would correctly assume that God would periodically lead us even to the brink of destruction in order to revive

our moral senses. Therefore, we must assume that it is not within the ability of man to preserve himself as a civilization of humankind on this earth. There is no “New Green Deal” for endless continuation of planet earth. We must come to this conclusion in view of the historical fact that God has terminated civilizations throughout the history of the world in order to illustrate the final termination that is yet to come. He has purged the earth of wicked civilizations, but preserved the earth for another trial run until the final consummation of all things.

The reason for these momentary terminations of civilizations throughout history is not difficult to understand. One simple statement in Scripture informs us that we do not morally have it in us as humanity to continue indefinitely as a civilization without losing our purpose for being here. It is simply not possible for humanity to stay the course of moral integrity and faith in the one true and living God. The aged prophet recited the reason for this from the mind of our Creator: “*O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man who walks to direct his steps*” (Jr 10:23). The Proverb preacher revealed why: “*The plans of the heart belong to man*” (Pv 16:1). In other words, because man was created with the freedom to make his own choices, he must take ownership of every choice he makes, and thus be held accountable for his choices.

Therefore, we must not forget what the apostle recited from the Holy Spirit, “*There is none righteous, no, not one*” (Rm 3:10). We were created free-moral individuals with the right to choose between good and evil. However, because we have difficulty in getting over ourselves, or past ourselves, we make too many selfish decisions. We often seek the pleasures of life over the promises of eternal life. It is as if we cannot help ourselves but to collectively go wrong as a civilization.

So for this reason, we are unable as a civilization to direct our ways unto living more righteously in reference to our relationships, either with our God or with one another. It is as if we have a moral malfunction in our hearts that is always pointed in the direction of writing off God and shooting down our fellow man. And in doing such, we implode civilization. We shot down our right to exist because we have

lost our purpose for existence. In other words, if we believe that we can exist as a civilization without the direction of our Creator, then we are inevitably doomed. This is precisely what happened to the civilization of the world that existed before the flood of Noah's day (See Rm 1:28-32; more later).

This at least helps us understand why our Creator allows calamities to come upon us that force us to reconsider God and others in our daily lives. No one wants to live in a narcissistically selfish society. Therefore, if we must endure a social calamity that forces us to once again consider God and the needs of others, then it is time to be thankful for the intervention of our Creator to bring us into situations of either physical or social calamity for the purpose of restoring faith. This is exactly what James meant when he wrote, "*Count it all joy when you fall into various trials*" (Js 1:2).

Social chaos is society trying to figure out some different, or possibly, better way of life. But those of faith must consider physical calamity as an opportunity to take their minds off the physical and redirect their thinking on things that are above (See Cl 3:1,2). It is this refocusing that presents Christians with the opportunity to count it all joy for the social chaos they must often endure until Jesus comes.

Chapter 2

SELF-IMPOSED TERMINATION

Before we conclude that our Creator was fiendish by supposedly preprogramming us for moral selfishness, we must consider the necessity of ourselves, as humanity, to have the right to make our own choices. This moral necessity is based on the fact that God is love (1 Jn 4:8). In order for God to be love, He of necessity had to create that which could return His love. It would have been impossible on the part of God to create that which could not sincerely say on one's own volition, "I love you, too." A preprogrammed robot could say such words, but they would be emotionally empty words. Unfortunately, a civilization of inhabitants who will collectively refuse to utter such words, and follow through with selfish living, is doomed.

Since God is love, then love must create that upon which love can be bestowed. This brings us to our existence as a civilization of human beings, and why we are here as we are today. We are a civilization of humans who can make a choice to say to our Creator, “We love you, too.”

Preprogrammed free-moral choice is an oxymoron statement. “Preprogrammed” and “free-moral” are opposites that cannot exist together. If we were preprogrammed to love God, then it would not be love at all. Therefore, and of necessity, as the reflection of the love of God, humanity had to be set on its way to be truly free after the uttering of the words, “Let there be.” In a sense, therefore, we are on our own in order to make freely our own choices as to how we would behave. God cannot be held accountable for any bad choices on our part, even if those choices are made as a collective of civilization.

How we behave as a civilization is influenced by a moral conscience with which we have been blessed by our Creator to be a moral governor for decision-making. However, the common moral standard by which the governor of our conscience would consciously make correct decisions has in the past led us in the wrong direction. We have established our own moral compass, and thus diverted ourselves off course from God. For example, during the last segment of the British Broadcasting Company’s twenty-six episode series entitled, *The World At War* that aired in 1973/74, the series producers estimated that as many as fifty-two million people died in the events leading up to and during WW2.

A collective decision of Germany, Japan and the other Axis countries before WW2 had morally gone wrong. Though the world was preserved to move on with other civilizations, the civilizations of humanity that existed in the Axis countries before the calamity of WW2 were morally different than the civilizations that now exist after the war, and to this day. The countries of Germany, Japan, Italy, and those countries who aligned themselves as the Axis powers before and during WW2, were morally transformed. The prewar civilizations were brought down, and subsequently were replaced by repentant civilizations that exist even unto this day.

We would conclude, therefore, that God allowed WW2 to occur in order to purge the world of those civilizations that would eventually lead to the global implosion of the moral conduct of the entire world. If this conclusion is correct, then the social conditions that existed among the Axis powers before the war should be eradicated from the world. The postwar moral standards of the Axis powers before the war should never be allowed to happen again with any nation of the world. In order to avert another such world conflict, the nations of the world took action after WW2. The very existence of the United Nations and NATO organizations were established on the foundation that world governments as a whole will never allow the moral behavior of the prewar Axis powers to ever again arise among any nation of the world. Those who do not understand this will never understand the concept of preemptive strikes against those dictators who would acquire weapons of mass destruction in order to enforce their political philosophy and power on other nations.

A. A God of intervention:

We do not forget that it is not in man to direct his own paths. Because this is true, then our Creator of necessity must be transcendent, that is, He must intervene along our pathway of history in order to keep us from self-destruction. In order for God to be a just God, therefore, He must not only intervene in human history, but humanity must be able to discern His intervention. A deist god is no god at all.

Fortunately, God has intervened throughout human history. He initially spoke to humanity through the fathers of tribal families (Hb 1:1). He also spoke through chosen prophets. And finally in a last effort to deliver us from the final destiny of a terminal world, He has spoken to humanity through the incarnation of His own self (Jn 1:1,2,14; Hb 1:2).

Throughout the existence of human history, faith in God has been the only recourse for individuals who seek to escape the final result of a metaphorical “moral second law of thermodynamics.” As the beginning of all that exists was certain, so also is the end of all things. A

beginning, of necessity, presupposes an ending. But in between the beginning and the ending, humanity, or at least segments of humanity at different times along the continuum of human history, have given up their right to exist. They have ceased producing candidates for heaven. Subsequently, some morally digressed societies of humanity had to be eliminated by God—this is His right as God—from the sea of humanity in order to preserve world civilization as a whole. This is exactly what God told Abraham when he was only a visitor in the land that would eventually be given to his descendants over four hundred years later. God said in reference to the occupants of the land of Palestine at the time Abraham was a visitor in the land, “*The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete*” (Gn 15:16).

We must not forget this point in reference to how God works with civilizations. This is our key to unlocking the door of understanding how God patiently allows man to seal his own doom. God is patient with the moral behavior of any civilization in the time of their moral digression (2 Pt 3:9). But there comes a time when the civilization as a whole has lost its purpose and moral compass in reference to producing people of faith for eternal dwelling. God’s patience eventually runs out. It is then that God allows a civilization to be taken out of world existence. Now if the moral degradation is global, then one can only reflect on the moral conditions of the world prior to the days of righteous Noah: “*God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*” (Gn 6:5).

The reason why the Israelites were commanded by God to dispel morally digressed cultures from Palestine four hundred years after Abraham was in the land, reveals that societies sometimes move past repentance, and thus must be removed from the world scene of civilizations in order that civilization as a whole be preserved (See Dt 9:4). There are always Sodom and Gomorrah societies that must be purged from world civilization. Those of faith are fortunate to have a biblical record of these things in order to make judgments concerning our own social predicaments today in which we might find ourselves.

In our times, nations with borders have slowed down the influence

of any one nation morally infecting any other nation. However, when globalization started breaking down borders, the immoral influence of one nation was given the opportunity to economically and morally influence many other nations. When world organizations adopted social dysfunctions that were contrary to the word of God, they often imposed on other nations these dysfunctions if any nation wanted to receive loans or foreign aid. These moral dysfunctions have often become a qualification for a nation to join some world organizations. For example, if a particular nation does not accept the supposed “human right” of homosexuality, then that nation is supposedly in violation of “human rights,” and consequently not eligible to be in the family of world nations.

B. The final intervention:

It is thus incumbent on ourselves to read again the historical records of our Bibles. We must do so in order to understand why God allowed certain segments of humanity throughout history to be purged of moral viruses that could eventually lead to the finality of a civilization as a whole. Moral viruses can affect an entire world civilization as the one that existed before and during the days of Noah (More later). We can better comprehend occasional purgings of godless and immoral civilizations since Noah’s day, and possibly now, as we move toward a time when human civilization as a whole is beginning to lose its moral compass, and subsequently, its purpose for existence.

Though spoken only a few years before the consummation of Jewish nationalism during the first century years of the Roman Empire, at least metaphorically, the Holy Spirit said the following words, indicating another consummation that was yet to come in the lives of those to whom Peter wrote:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise and the elements will melt with fervent heat. The earth also and the works that are therein will be burned up. Since all these things will be dissolved, what sort of people ought we

to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, will be dissolved and the elements will melt with fervent heat? (2 Pt 3:10-12).

Chapter 3

BEFORE THE FIRST RAIN DROP

There is an astonishing event recorded in the Bible concerning a global cleansing resurfacing of the entire earth by a worldwide flood. It is imperative that we understand the reason for that global cleansing of the earth in order that we can use such as a measure of where we now stand as a global civilization. This is important because the event of Noah's day establishes the foundation upon which Christians form their world view for the existence of this world and all humanity.

The reason for the global catastrophe of Noah's day gives us some insight into why we are here, and the responsibility that humanity has as a whole to sustain the present existence of human civilization. For this reason we must investigate the cause and effect of a judgment statement that is made in Genesis 6:5,6. This statement reveals the reason for the catastrophic flood of Noah's day. It was a global event that wiped away the civilization of the old world that then was, while at the same time, brought into existence the physical world in which we now live:

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. So the Lord grieved that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him in His heart.

A. The old world was spoiled by sin:

Peter revealed that there was once an "old world" that existed before the global deluge of Noah's day (2 Pt 2:5). It was an "old world" because it was drastically different from the "new world" that now exists. Peter explained how the "old" transitioned into the "new":

"For this they willfully forget, that by the word of God the heavens

*were of old and the earth standing out of the water and in the water, through which **the world that then existed was destroyed, being overflowed with water**” (2 Pt 3:5,6).*

In the old world in which Noah lived, all humanity possibly never experienced a drop of rain. That old world was overthrown by water when God unleashed the fountains of the deep, in conjunction with bringing down from the heavens the watery firmament that had for millennia protected all life on the earth (Gn 7:11). The world that Noah experienced before this cataclysmic event was far different than the world that now exists. This at least explains the existence of the rainbow after the flood, which rainbow is produced by falling rain that existed after the flood, and not before. The amount of water that was needed for the flood came up from the earth and down from the firmament. The result of this cataclysmic event was indeed earth changing. It was truly a cataclysmic event, which word Peter used in the 2 Peter 3:6 statement that is translated “overflowed.”

Suppose for a moment the continuation of the physical function of the earth after it was initially created. After the creation of Adam and Eve, there was possibly no rain that came from the build up of cumulous clouds because there were no rainstorms. There were no tornadoes or hurricanes that were produced by the uneven heating of an atmosphere that was governed by moisture in the air. There were no oceans as we know them today. However, vegetation was so lush throughout the world that their deluge destruction caused the great oil and coal deposits that we witness in our world today.

The earth before the flood of Noah’s day was very different from the world as we now experience it. We have previously written extensively on the scientific evidence of that old world in other books (See specifically Book 26: *The Bible and Science*, chapters 4 - 7, Biblical Research Library; africainternational.org). But it is worth noting here the existence of that “old world,” for we must understand why it no longer exists. We must determine why God caused such a cataclysmic event in order to annihilate the civilization of the world that existed before the flood.

As explained in the book, *The Bible and Science*, there was a great canopy of the firmament above the earth that controlled the climate that existed between the earth and the firmament of the heavens. If there were no such thing as the weather that we experience today, then we wonder how the earth was watered. Since there was overwhelming vegetation that existed throughout the world from the north pole to the south pole, we wonder how this vegetation was watered. Genesis 2:6 would provide an answer: “*But there went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.*”

After the creation, and before the flood of Noah’s day, there was no such thing as rain. Before the flood of Noah’s day, and the present existence of the oceans as we now see them, all vegetation of the world existed in a worldwide climate of warmth from the north pole to the south pole. In fact, the poles did not exist as we see them today. All vegetation upon the face of the earth was watered from water that came up from the soil. There was so much water (“mist”) that came up from the ground that the excess formed four rivers that flowed through the Garden of Eden (See Gn 2:11-14).

Before the flood there was a tremendously productive environment in reference to the growth of all biological vegetation. This was the intended environment in which God originally planned that mankind should live. But then things went wrong by the first bite of a forbidden fruit. That first bite meant that civilization would eventually bite the dust. The sin of Adam and Eve set in motion an inevitable consummation of a world that was originally created as a beautiful habitat for civilization.

We have no idea how long Adam and Eve lived in the wonderland of the pre-flood physical world before they introduced sin into the world. They could have lived for centuries before they sinned, for the pronouncement of physical death did not come until after their sin, which sin could have happened long after their initial creation (See 1 Co 15:20-22). It is simply not possible to establish any definite period of time between the initial creation and the fall of man through the sin of Adam and Eve.

Because of the brevity of the account of their lives before the eat-

ing of the forbidden fruit, we only assume that Adam and Eve had lived a short time on the face of the earth. But the scientific evidence of the earth would suggest something different. The evidence suggests that their lives before their fall should be measured in centuries, not years. It is simply difficult to assign a period in years until they sinned. We have only hints, one of which would be that after the murder of Abel, Cain fled to an area where there was at least another society of people in existence, which society came from the seedline of Adam and Eve (See Gn 6:16).

Also consider the fact that the Lord had to place a physical mark on Cain when he went to dwell with another society in the land of Nod. He was marked in order that no one kill him (Gn 6:15). The fact that he needed to be marked indicates that there existed a great number of people on the face of the earth at the time who could see the mark.

All this information assumes that by the time Cain fled to another society, there were other societies of people on the face of the earth that resulted from the offspring of Adam and Eve. In other words, there are gaps in the recorded genealogy from Adam to Noah, which gaps in biblical genealogy were not uncommon.

For example, when Jude mentioned that Enoch, Noah's "great grandfather," was the seventh from Adam, it would not be presumptuous to assume that there were gaps in this genealogy. We assume this from the gaps that are in the genealogy of Jesus from Abraham to Joseph that is recorded in Matthew 1:1-16. Jude's record that Enoch was the "seventh from Adam" may have meant that he was the seventh faithful prophet that maintained a spiritual bloodline from Adam that eventually extended to Noah through Methuselah and Lamech (See Gn 5:21-31). Gaps in the genealogies of the Bible were made simply because the Holy Spirit was not focusing on placing every descendant in a particular genealogy. It was not the Spirit's purpose to make a list in a genealogy to establish a complete physical seedline of individuals. He only wanted to reveal the final result of a particular seedline. According to the seedline heritage of Matthew 1:1-16, the final result was Joseph, and then Jesus.

B. Moral condition of the pre-flood civilization:

The focus of our attention in the context of the moral state of humanity at the time of Noah is of great concern when we compare the moral condition of the world at that time with the moral condition of the world in which we now live. Genesis 6:5,6 is a statement of termination, that is, a time when a civilization has reached the moral state of existence at which it loses its right to exist. We must consider the civilization that existed before the flood with ours today in order to determine the moral standards by which we would judge the civilization of the world in which we now live. Noah's civilization is the "moral dictionary" to determine if a civilization is setting itself up for consummation.

Civilization gives up its right to exist if the majority of the civilization ceases to produce that for which humanity was originally created. The inspired historian of Genesis wrote that the global deluge of Noah's day was caused as a result of a moral dysfunction that existed within the civilization that existed at that time. The civilization of the world had digressed to such a low moral state of dysfunction that it became a civilization that ceased to carry out God's intended purpose for which it was created. The historian wrote, "*Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart [man's] was only evil continually*" (Gn 6:5).

We would understand that "evil" in the preceding statement means to function contrary to the purpose of God. Evil is not only a dysfunctional relationship between people, but it is also a dysfunctional relationship between people and God. Therefore, the civilization that existed before the deluge of Noah's day was not terminated simply because of an evil function within the civilization between people. If this were the total reason why God terminated that civilization, then He could have left it to self-destruct. But there was more involved in the reason for terminating that civilization simply because it was supposedly warring endlessly within itself. The rejection was total because the civilization as a whole had totally rejected their Creator. They had subsequently created gods after their own imagination, and then established moral standards of relationships that were contrary to the will of

God. Paul went into great detail on this in Romans 1. (More later.)

By the time Noah lived on the face of the earth, the heart of man had gone morally wrong because humanity as a whole had gone from God. Since this moral condition was continuous, and thus self-perpetuating, then humanity at the time had given up its right to continue to exist upon the face of the earth. The earth, therefore, had to be sanitized of the immoral virus that plagued all humanity that lived at that time upon the face of the earth. Unfortunately, in order to purge the earth that then existed, the physical earth had to suffer the consequences of the moral dysfunction of mankind.

The problem was not in the physical world and animal life that was at that time sustained by the earth. The problem was humanity. Nevertheless, the physical earth and all animals had to suffer the consequences for the evil behavior of man. Therefore, we conclude the following very important principle upon which our world view concerning the existence of this world is founded: **The continued existence of the world as we now know it must be contingent on the moral behavior of humanity that inhabits the earth, which behavior depends on our belief that God is indeed our Creator.** In other words, when “*every imagination of the thoughts*” of man become continually evil, then the world that now exists must be discontinued. If we as a civilization give up on God as our Creator, opting for a “god” after the imagination of a god who would conform to our own imagination, then we will give ourselves over to establishing our own moral standards as supposedly evolved creatures.

In the case of Noah, the earth was totally resurfaced into a world that was drastically different after the flood. This moves us into a serious discussion concerning the moral state of the world before the cleansing flood of Noah’s day. We must take this journey into the moral function of the world before the flood because we must assume that God wants us to use the moral behavior of the civilization before the flood as a measure of where the world morally stands at any one time in history. The fact that the statement of Genesis 6:5,6 exists in the written record of the Bible, as well as all the events surrounding the flood, assumes that these things were written for our learning. “*Now these*

things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Co 10:11; see Rm 15:4). Though this statement was written in the context of the consummation of national Israel in A.D. 70, we will not fail to apply the significance of its meaning to our situation today in order to learn why the civilization of Noah’s time came to an abrupt end.

C. Ministry of a vexed preacher:

The account of the global deluge is explained by the moral behavior and standards by which Noah conducted himself. Understanding Noah and his family heritage gives us some insight into why God brought judgment upon the world civilization that existed before the flood.

Noah’s story begins with the spiritual heritage that he received from his forefathers. The Holy Spirit referred to him as “*a preacher of righteousness*” because of the righteous behavior that he had inherited from his great grandfather, Enoch (2 Pt 3:5). “*Enoch walked with God. And he was not, for God took him*” (Gn 5:24).

Enoch then gave birth to Methuselah who lived to be 969 years old (Gn 5:27). Methuselah probably died the year of the flood, or it may have been—we are not told—that he also was “taken by God” in order that he not experience the horror of the flood by being drown in the waters of the flood.

When Methuselah was 187 years old, he gave birth to Lemech (Gn 5:25). And then Lemech gave birth to Noah. Inferring the reason why Lemech named his son Noah, we can understand why God would open doors of righteousness during times of moral decay. Special calamities often sensitize people to resort to their Creator. Lemech prophesied concerning Noah, “*This one will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands*” (Gn 5:29).

The statement, “*comfort us concerning our work,*” opens the door into understanding the mission of this godly heritage that had started centuries before through Enoch, the spiritual great grandfather of Noah. Of all the civilizations of the world at that time, only the spiritual heritage of Enoch, which continued to Noah, could be found. There were

no other societies throughout the entire pre-flood world that were able to give birth to a righteous preacher as Noah. This fact assumes that all the societies of the world civilization that then existed had given up on God.

Noah was a preacher of righteousness who comforted the heritage of Enoch. He was able to do this because he carried on with the righteous heritage of his forefathers. Enoch, Methuselah and Lemech, and possibly others of this heritage, had numerous children throughout several centuries. Nevertheless, it was only this one child, Noah, about whom the statement was made that he “*will comfort us.*” Noah would be comfort to the spiritual heritage of Enoch because he was chosen by God to preserve humanity beyond the flood. The comforting, therefore, referred more to how Noah lived than what he preached.

Noah brought comfort to his family heritage because he lived as a preacher of righteousness who maintained his faith in the midst of all world societies that had long given up a knowledge of God (See Hb 11:5). When the Genesis historian stated, “our work,” we do not understand that he referred to their work in the fields. That work (toil) is identified in the statement after the conjunction “and.” Lemech was identifying “our work” as the heritage of continuing the spiritual ministry of being a preacher of righteousness.

And such do those children today who carry on with the spiritual heritage that is handed down to them from their parents. Sons and daughters who carry on with the righteous heritage of their fathers and mothers bring comfort to their parents by their own righteous behavior. They are not as the two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who brought shame on the household of Eli their father (See 1 Sm 2:12-36).

Chapter 4

IDENTITY OF A DOOMED CIVILIZATION

After the ministry of Jesus, the gospel was extensively preached to the Jews in order to call Jews of faith out of national Israel (See Rm 9:22-26). Fifteen hundred years before when the Jews came out of Egyptian captivity, God was patient with them until a generation of citizenship had been purged from Israel before they went in to possess

the land of promise. This was necessary in order that those who initially came out of captivity did not take with them into the new land a religiosity that was infested with Egyptian thinking. The call that went out to all Israel before the consummation of A.D. 70 was similar.

A. Forty years of patience:

For forty years God used the same process of cleansing as He did with the Israelites when they came out of Egyptian captivity. For forty years from the cross to the final rejection in A.D. 70, God gave His people time to accept Jesus as the Messiah and Savior of the world. After this time of patience, however, God finally turned away from the old Israel who continued to reject His Son. Since the Jews at the time Jesus ministered on earth had fabricated out of their own traditions a religion that conformed to the man-made religion of their forefathers, it was time once again for a cleansing. This cleansing was a God-ordained work to reveal to all Jews, and to the converted Gentiles, that Jesus was the Messiah and Savior, which Messiah and Savior the majority of the Jews had rejected during the ministry of Jesus.

In the “cleansing” that took place in A.D. 70, it was then that the world would discover that the religion of the Jews was rejected by God (See Gl 1:13,14). After the cleansing of A.D. 70, those who believed on Jesus would reason that God was now with a new Israel by bringing His judgment on the old national Israel. Jesus had prophesied this during His ministry. He had said that after the A.D. 70 cleansing, *“Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father”* (Mt 13:43). As Noah and his family were revealed by the flood as the righteous in the kingdom of the Father, so the rejection of national Israel in A.D. 70 would do the same in reference to Judaism.

B. A precursor to cleansing:

Jesus used the flood of Noah’s day as a precursor to the rejection of Israel in A.D. 70 (See Jd 14-16). God the Son did the same with national Israel as God the Father did with the world civilization that

existed before the flood. These two global cleansings in time should give us a standard by which to judge the present world in reference to the final consummation that is yet to come. This comparison was also made by Jesus in the context of **Matthew 24:36-39**.

Jesus introduced the historical commentary of the coming event of A.D. 70 with the following statement: “*But of that **day and hour** no one knows, not even the angels of heaven nor the Son, but My Father only*” (Mt 24:36). This statement has nothing to do with the end of time, for the context refers to events “in time,” not at the “end of time” finalities. Though the spiritual condition of the world at the time of Noah and national Israel at the time of their consummations would illustrate the spiritual condition of the world at the end of time, we must not miss the immediate historical context in which these prophetic statements were made.

In the context of Matthew 24, Jesus was discussing **in-time** judgment that would come upon Israel in A.D. 70, not events that would transpire with all mankind that would occur at the end of time. It is imperative to understand, therefore, that when Jesus used the words “day and hour,” He was not referring to a 24-hour day and a 60-minute hour. Those who are obsessed with end-of-time events often miss this point. What Jesus meant was that there was an **in-time** event of judgment (the flood) that illustrated another in-time judgment (A.D. 70) that was coming in the lifetime of some of those younger disciples who stood in His presence at the time He made the prophecy of Matthew 24 (Mk 9:1). While in His earthly ministry, neither Jesus nor the angels were given dates concerning this in-time judgment simply because the Father did not want the disciples of Jesus in His earthly ministry badgering His Son about specific times.

So Jesus continued, “*But as the **days of Noah** were, so also will be the **coming of the Son of Man***” (Mt 24:37). Jesus wanted His immediate disciples to understand the future social and religious environment into which they were coming by reflecting on the social and religious environment of the days that led up to the flood of Noah’s day. This is also our concern, for we are seeking to understand why God brought the global deluge on the civilization that existed at the time of

Noah. Unfortunately, some modern-day speculators have confused many people concerning the actual message that Jesus was trying to make in the entire chapter of Matthew 24. They steal Jesus' personal warning away from His immediate Jewish audience in order to shock into obedience those in whom they would create fear. Specifically, fear generating prognosticators fail to interpret the words and phrases of Matthew 24:36-39 in the immediate context of the audience to which Jesus directed the statements. So in the preceding statement of Jesus in Matthew 24:39, Jesus revealed a commentary of the social and religious conditions of national Israel that would justify God's judgment of that apostate Israel in the coming rejection of A.D. 70.

C. In-time versus end-of-time:

The "day and hour" must therefore be understood in the context of what happened in the "days of Noah." We thus understand that what Jesus was discussing were matters of judgment **in time**, not at the end of time. The "coming of the Lord" in judgment on the civilization of Noah's day took place in time. The future event about which Jesus was speaking in the context of Matthew 24 would also take place in time. And since the judgment of God on Noah's generation resulted from the "coming" of the Lord on that generation, **then it is imperative again to understand that the "coming of the Son of Man" is judgment language of things that would transpire in time.** When the Lord came in judgment on the Assyrian Empire, it was dissolved.

When the Lord came in judgment on the Babylonian Empire, it too was dissolved. And now the coming of the Lord was to be a judgment of national Israel. This judgment would be as the coming of the Lord in judgment on the civilization that existed during the days of Noah. We understand what resulted from that "coming of the Lord," and thus we concluded that in a similar way there would be a termination of something when the Son of Man (Jesus) came in judgment on national Israel. In reference to Jesus' coming again in judgment on this present world, we correctly use the word "final." His next coming in judgment will be His **final** coming.

D. Illustration of in-time rejection:

Jesus continued to address His immediate audience, “*For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until that day [time] when Noah entered the ark*” (Mt 24:38). The word “as” is a crucial simile that connects the illustration of the flood of Noah’s day with what Jesus was prophesying in the context of Matthew 24. During the time of Noah, there was no concern about the end of things in time. The preaching of Noah that there was an impending judgment coming did not change the life-style of the people. They carried on unrepentant as if things would continue in the future as they were at the time they were living unrighteously. The restaurants stayed open. The pubs likewise continued to be places for the meeting of unconcerned unbelievers. Social institutions of marriage continued as if the newlyweds would live happily ever after. Other than the preaching of the righteous Noah, there was no indication that there was an impending doom in the future about which the “crazy preacher” was proclaiming in the suburbs where he was building a boat, for which there was no water in sight on which it would float.

They wondered why anyone would need a boat, for there were possibly no lakes, at least no rivers too wide to cross. There were probably no oceans, for all the water that existed in that world was held up in the firmament above the earth and in the depths of the earth (Gn 7:11). The local residents who mocked Noah may have not even understood the concept of a boat. And here was this obsessed preacher building a monstrosity that certainly was not being built according to the local building codes.

The locals certainly concluded that Noah was only a “doomsday” preacher who had lost his mind. Unfortunately for that generation, the big difference between modern-day doomsday preachers and Noah was that Noah was a preacher righteousness, whereas the modern-day preacher is usually only concerned about his own self-preservation in a world that is destined to a destruction from which no bunker will deliver him. Noah’s bunker could at least float above that which brought

on the destruction of the old world, whereas in the next doomsday, no bunker will be able to withstand the intense heat.

E. Lack of understanding:

So Jesus continued to explain the sociological condition of the civilization of Noah's time before God lock him down in the ark. At that time, the unbelievers "*did not understand until the flood came and took them all away*" (Mt 24:39). Unbelievers who live for the moment do not understand in-time warnings. They certainly do not believe end-of-time prophecies. They do not because such warnings interfere with their worldly life-styles. It is simply outside their paradigm of living to believe that life as they know it will not carry on as usual.

Nevertheless, with that first rain drop that splashed on the foreheads of those who continued to heckle Noah from outside the ark, the people started to realize that they should have responded to the invitation of the preacher. They had vexed the preacher of righteousness every day for at least the last seventy-five years while Noah and his sons built the ark. But it was not until that last day as they witnessed God slam shut the only door of the ark that they finally realized that they should have responded to all those sermons of the preacher of righteousness. But it was then that God came through the flood and "*took them all away*" (Mt 24:39). And in like manner, when the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the rejection of national Israel had already been determined in Rome by the Roman government. As it was when Noah entered the ark, so it would be when Rome commissioned its army against Jerusalem. There would be no turning back. There would be no more opportunity for repentance on the part of those Jewish nationalists who were destined for doom. As the judgment of Noah's generation was a judgment in time, so also would be the judgment on Jerusalem.

F. The taken:

Unless we misunderstand, or confuse the in-time judgment upon Jerusalem with the judgment of God at the end of time, we can understand clearly that about which Jesus was speaking in the context of Matthew 24. *“Then will two men be in the field, the one will be **taken** and the other **left**. Two women will be grinding at the mill, one will be **taken** and the other **left**”* (Mt 24:40,41). In verse 39 Jesus had just said that *“the flood came and **took them all away.**”* Those who were taken away were those who heckled Noah all his life. **The unrighteous were taken away**, and Noah, with his family, were left.

We must not miss this point, lest we miss a very important point in reference to the civilization of Noah’s day, as well as Jesus’ use of that in-time judgment to illustrate the rejection of national Israel in A.D. 70. Since the unrighteous, who were not allowed to enter the ark were taken away, so it would be in reference to the unrighteous who would not enter into Christ before the rejection of national Israel (See Rm 6:3-6). **The unbelievers were taken away in both events. The righteous believers were left.**

But in reference to the end of time, **it will be the righteous who will be taken.** *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and **remain will be caught up** [taken] **together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air**”* (1 Th 4:16,17). In the final coming at the end of time, the righteous, not the wicked, will be taken. The wicked will be left in order to be destroyed with the earth and the works therein.

Though in the context of Matthew 24 Jesus was prophesying the rejection of national Israel in time, He used the moral and social conditions of the civilization that existed during the days of Noah to illustrate His point. The contemporary generation that lived during the time that Noah preached and built had no concern for the matters about which he spoke. They were unrepentant. Peter explained that that generation of people was *“disobedient when the longsuffering of God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared, in which few, that is, eight souls were saved by water”* (1 Pt 3:20).

If one were to be saved from the flood, he or she had to be in the

ark. Nothing had changed in this principle by the time of the A.D. 70 judgment. One had to be immersed in water in order to come into the “ark” of the body of Christ if he or she would be saved from the impending judgment that was coming upon national Israel.

Jesus gave the prophecy of Matthew 24, therefore, not only to motivate obedience to the gospel, but also to save lives. So in the following statement, Peter identified the dividing point between the saved and the lost in reference to water: “*The like figure whereunto even baptism does also now save us*” (1 Pt 3:21). Nothing will change in this principle until the final coming of the Lord in judgment on the world. “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*” (Gl 3:27; see Rm 6:3-6). Contrary to the purpose of the water during the time of Noah, water will again divide those who are taken (the righteous), and those who are left (the unrighteous), at the end of time. But in the waters of baptism, water would deliver, not condemn. Those who would be condemned would be those who refused to pass through the water to be delivered from their old world of sin (At 22:16).

G. The mandate of preparedness:

It is significant how Jesus concluded His comparison between the time of Noah with the time before the consummation of national Israel. He made the statement, “*Therefore, watch, for you do not know what day [time] your Lord is coming*” (Mt 24:42). We would think that this would put an end to all the speculators who would invent “signs of the times” to be applied to the final coming of the Lord. But this is not the case. Concerning the time when God would finally reject national Israel, there would be “signs of the times” that Jesus gave. But no such signs are given in the New Testament in reference to the final coming of Jesus, not even in the book of Revelation.

In reference to the consummation of the civilization that existed before the time of the flood of Noah’s day, the only indication of such an event was the preaching of Noah. Other than this, Noah’s generation “*did not understand until the flood came and took them all away*” (Mt 24:39). But Jesus also said that this would be how it would be in

reference to the judgment that would come on national Israel, which judgment would transpire about forty years after He made the prophecy of Matthew 24.

In reflecting on the unbelievers before the flood, Jesus said to His disciples, “*So also will be the coming of the Son of Man*” (Mt 24:39). The unbelieving Jews were forewarned by the preaching of the early Christians who went forth preaching everywhere (At 8:4). The Lord even validated the message they preached with miraculous signs (Mk 16:20). The unbelieving Jews at the time of the consummation of national, therefore, had no excuse. In reference to the generation of Noah’s day, Noah, his sons and their wives, understood that an end was coming. They were the believers. The unbelievers of Noah’s generation, however, did not believe that an end was coming. Because they refused to believe the message of Noah, they had no excuse.

It was the believers who could discern the signs that Jesus gave concerning the rejection of national Israel. When they concluded that national Israel would bear no more children in obedience to the gospel, then the Christians could conclude that God needed national Israel no more. For this reason, therefore, Jesus told the believers that they must “watch.” Therefore, when the disciples perceived that He was finished with national Israel because they had hardened their hearts in every synagogue against the Messiah and Savior of the world, then Jesus said to His disciples, “*You also be ready*” for the final rejection of national Israel (Mt 24:44).

It is not the case now that the believers are looking for some signs of the times in order to determine the end of the present world. Christians must simply be ready at all times, as was Noah and his family in reference to the coming rainstorm. “Watch” means to discern the times. Though this mandate was made in the context of the final rejection of national Israel, this would at least be the only encouragement for us to be ready at all times for the final coming of the Lord. For those who are always ready, then they, as believers, have no worry about the coming of the Lord in judgment on this present world. They need only to be concerned when the preaching of the gospel no longer produces any fruit among those of this present world. Until then, they simply do

what Peter instructed: “*Since all these things will be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, **looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God***” (2 Pt 3:11,12).

Chapter 5 PROPHECY OF CONSUMMATION

With the description of both Paul and Peter, the Holy Spirit used the hand of Jude to inscribe an unrecorded message of a preacher who lived before the flood of Noah’s day. Though in its quoted context, Jude applied Enoch’s prophecy to the Lord’s rejection of national Israel in A.D. 70. The quotation in its original historical context explains the moral condition of the civilization that existed in Noah’s day. According to Enoch’s description of that civilization, it was a civilization that needed to be cleansed from the face of the earth:

Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, “Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment on all, and to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds that they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against Him (Jd 14,15).

A. Losing our moral compass.

Peter opened the door for our understanding of the moral condition of the civilization that existed before that ungodly civilization was washed of the face of the earth. God “*did not spare the old world [before the flood], but saved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly*” (2 Pt 2:5). Noah’s generation was an ungodly civilization that had given up its purpose for existence because the people had given up any knowledge of God. And in giving up on God, they gave up on His moral standards. When people disconnect in their relationship with God, they will disconnect with His revealed standards of morality. The generation of Noah irrevocably become ungodly.

In reference to the ungodly civilization that existed before the flood, Paul explained: ***“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness”*** (Rm 1:18). This is a principle that stands true throughout the history of mankind on the face of the earth. If this principle is violated, then God is just in terminating any civilization that would be characterized by the ungodliness and unrighteousness of those who suppress the truth. When a civilization is judged to be ungodly, and subsequently ruled by unrighteous people who would live ungodly lives as they did during the time Lot lived in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, then those of that generation will daily vex the righteous who remain in those societies. When this happens in a society, then it is time for the termination of that society, and in the case of Noah, that civilization (2 Pt 2:7,8).

It is time for termination because the civilization has lost its moral compass, and thus its purpose for existence. The termination of any society is validated on the basis of what Peter said of the societies of Sodom and Gomorrah: God ***“delivered righteous Lot”*** because he was ***“oppressed with the filthy behavior of the wicked”*** (2 Pt 2:7). And so, when a civilization morally digresses to where the righteous are vexed by a filthy generation, then it is time for termination.

We must consider for a moment that when a society forsakes the knowledge of a creating God, it will subsequently establish its own moral standards, such as the practice of the aborting (murder) of innocent babies, the genocide of neighboring societies, or the cannibalism of one society of another. Such societies have disconnected from the moral standards of their Creator. There digressed moral behavior disqualifies them from continued existence.

B. Giving up on those who give up on God.

In Romans 1, Paul explained how a civilization will digress to moral degradation as the civilization that existed before the flood of Noah’s day. The world civilization in which Noah lived ***“became vain in their imaginations and their foolish hearts were darkened”*** (Rm 1:21).

It was a civilization of people who, “*professing to be wise, they became fools*” (Rm 1:22). It was not that the people ceased being religious. On the contrary, they created gods after their own imaginations, and then sensual religious behavior that they believed would please their imagined gods. They “*changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man and of birds and four-footed beasts and crawling things*” (Rm 1:23). A better description of many such religions today could not have been written. When people forsake the one true God who is spirit, they seek to fashion in sculpture or art an image of the god that they have created in their minds.

This is certainly the description of any civilization that makes either government, government officials, or country their god. When this happens in a democratic society, the society establishes its own codes of morality through the courts of the land. The courts subsequently become the judges of what constitutes moral values. Such a society is commonly referred to in this time as “progressives.” They are actually progressing away from a knowledge of the God of heaven, and thus digressing away from His moral standards.

When a civilization gives up on God, then there is no other opportunity for the citizens of that civilization to express their own religiosity according to the will of God. It is not that people become nonreligious when they give up a knowledge of the one true and living God. It is as was illustrated by the idolatrous Israelites when they accepted the gods of the surrounding nations. They subsequently forgot the law of God, and then adopted the behavior that was dictated by the religions around them (See Hs 4:6).

People will often continue to remain religious even after they have given up a knowledge of the one true and living God of creation. We live in such a religious world today. There are people throughout the world today who are very religious. Unfortunately, they know little or nothing about the Bible. Even those who have a shallow knowledge of the Bible are often, in their world view, far removed from a biblical world view. For example, some have adopted a world view of evolution by which they have forsaken the God of creation. Therefore, in

their ignorance of who God is according to the description of God in the Bible, they continue to come together for mesmerizing “Christian” assemblies that appeal to the minds of a narcissistic civilization of misguided religionists. Unfortunately, their beliefs and behavior are not directed by the word of God. We live in a world that is not unlike the world in which Noah lived, and the religious state of apostate Israel. We must not convince ourselves that a packed church house indicates a group of people who are gospel-driven in their ignorance of the word of God.

So in reference to Noah’s generation, the Holy Spirit continued through Paul with the words, “*God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies among themselves*” (Rm 1:24). If we would wonder how this happens in a religious society, then the Spirit explained: “***They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and swerved the creature [man himself] rather than the Creator***” (Rm 1:25). This is a description of religious narcissism. In other words, one is religious for what he or she gets out of religion. The reason for this, Paul explained, is easy to understand. These “*did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved*” (2 Th 2:10). They chose to believe a lie in order “*that they all might be condemned who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness*” (2 Th 2:12). This is the biblical definition of narcissism. No better description could have been made of a narcissistic world of religionists who trumpet together in order to please themselves in their religiosity. Their purpose is not to come together in order to worship the God who created all things, but to please themselves in order to “get something out of their worship.” If they go away from the assembly without experiencing “their god”—a supposed encounter with the Holy Spirit through speaking in tongues or falling on the floor in some rapturous moment of ecstasy—then they are frustrated. Their narcissism has not been satisfied.

All such religiosity is simply worship of a god that has been created after one’s own imagination, a god whom we have allowed ourselves to believe to be in tune with all our mesmerizing noise and emotional extravaganza. When we follow after “the lusts of our own hearts,”

we know that we are in trouble in our narcissism. Christianity is walking and worshiping in gratitude for what God did for us through His Son. Religion is allowing ourselves to be motivated by something that is earthly, not heavenly. Religion is based on our performance of the religious rites and ceremonies what we bind on ourselves. It is for this reason that when one steps into the realm of religion, he or she is on a quest to determine one's own moral standards.

Unfortunately, those who follow after the lusts of their own hearts do not realize that they are following after the earthly stimulus of what man can produce. A civilization of worshipers who have given up on the God of creation, and thus, given up the truth of God, have no motivation to repent. They have forgotten that to which they must repent. Repentance to the narcissistic religionist means intensifying the performance of his meritorious rites and ceremonies. If he is not satisfied with the performance of his religious rites and ceremonies, he will only perform them with cultic intensity.

During the days of Noah, God simply decided that it was time to start over again with a civilization that would be built on the faith of one who remained committed throughout almost a century of building a boat.

*By faith Noah, being warned by God of **things not yet seen**, moved with **fear** [obedience], prepared an ark for the saving of his house, **by which he condemned the world** and became heir of the righteousness that is according to faith (Hb 11:7).*

All the time during the building, for example, Noah reminded the unrighteous audience to which he preach that rain drops were coming. Surely they not only thought him to be a foolish old man in his prophecy of a global flood, they vexed his spirit every day. Nevertheless, by his faithful commitment, "*he condemned the world.*"

C. We are there:

Now if we would venture into the Holy Spirit's dictionary on what

the Romans 1 text means in reference to being narcissistically given over to “the lusts of our own hearts,” then Romans 1:26,27 is a shocking description of a world today that has been influenced by ungodly philosophies and theologies in which we now find ourselves living. If one would supposedly be a Bible believer, and thus offended by the following description of the moral state of the civilization that existed during the days prior to the global cleansing by the flood of Noah’s day, then he must conclude that he is part of the problem. The Holy Spirit moved the hand of the apostle Paul to write the following social dictionary of that generation that was overthrown by water:

*For this cause **God gave them up** to vile passions, for even their women changed the natural use of the body into that which is against nature. And also in the same way the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working what is indecent and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error that was due (Rm 1:26,27).*

This statement by God the Holy Spirit defines the specific moral dysfunction of the civilization that God removed from the face of the earth. That was a morally dysfunctional civilization which would fall under the definition of fornication, and specifically the subpoint of homosexuality. Today, this category of moral dysfunction is referred to as LGBT. These are the **L**esbian, **G**ay, **B**isexual, and **T**ransgender individuals within a society that God has given over to their vile passions. Some would add a “Q” for “questioning,” that is, one questions his or her gender—as if these folks had a choice to determine whether they were either male or female. They consider themselves an “it” until they determine how they choose to live. They thus seek to live contrary to the natural function of male and female as a civilization. God has given them over to serve their “vile passions.”

We are reminded of the moral societies of Sodom and Gomorrah. Some of the citizens of those societies wanted to commit homosexuality with the messengers who came to deliver Lot and his family. These people were of the moral nature of what Paul described in Romans

1:26:27. They had given themselves over to “vile passions,” so much, so that excluding Lot and his family, not even ten righteous people could be found among the residents of the two cities (See Gn 18:16-33).

When the three messengers first came to Abraham, a man of faith, Abraham bowed down to them, recognizing immediately that they were messengers from God (Gn 18:1,2). Two of the messengers then went on to deliver Lot out of Sodom. And again, when this man of faith, Lot, saw the two messengers, he too recognized them to be messengers from God (Gn 19:1). But then the depraved men of the society of Sodom thought otherwise. They came to Lot’s house and demanded that he bring the messengers out to them. They said, “*Bring them out to us so that we may have [sexual] relations with them*” (Gn 19:5). They wanted to have homosexual relations with the two messengers of God. These people were so morally depraved in their minds that they could not recognize that the messengers were from God. When a society can no longer identify a man of God who lives the word of God, then that society, whether religious or not, has given up its right to exist.

When a society morally digresses to the point that the citizens do not recognize any messengers from the one true and living God, then that society has morally digressed beyond repentance. Lot lived in such a society, and thus that society vexed him daily (2 Pt 2:8). When righteous people are vexed with the ungodly of any society, then we know that that society has digressed beyond repentance. The society thus classifies itself with the civilization that was purged from the earth by the flood of Noah’s day, or was incinerated with fire and brimstone as Sodom and Gomorrah.

We must not forget Lot’s wife. She too had become so engrossed in the ungodly culture of Sodom that she made an effort to turn back to the city. She did not want to just look back, but she looked back in order to go back. She was one who would say, “Curse God and die.” And so she did (Gn 19:26). And then the daughters of Lot were so messed up morally that they committed incest with their father in order to have children by him (Gn 19:30-36).

We must determine if we live in such a society today. We must

determine if we are living in a world civilization that is advancing toward a finality. Since the world is destined toward a final consummation of all things through a fiery destruction, then we must assume that there is a future doom in store for the world (See 2 Th 1:6-9).

It is always the challenge of the Christian to compare the society in which he lives with the societies of Sodom and Gomorrah. Because the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is recorded in the Bible, we must assume that God wants us to use the destruction of those cities in the past to morally measure our own society. We must do this in order to make some general understanding as to how long God will patiently endure our sin until He pronounces the consummation of our world.

Since God has in the past brought to an end those civilizations that have lost His moral compass and purpose, then as Bible believers we must always compare the moral condition of the present civilization with those civilizations in the past that God brought to an end. It is not a question as to if this civilization of the world will meet its final destruction. It is a question as to how far along we are in digressing from God's purpose to produce candidates for heaven.

It is always a question as to how close our civilization is morally to those civilizations that God purged from the face of the earth. We must also assume that as God was patient with the civilization of Noah's time while the ark was being built, so He is patient with the civilization of today. But in reference to Noah's generation, God's patience lasted only to the time when Noah completed the ark (1 Pt 3:20). Sooner or later, God's patience runs out.

D. Be prepared at all times.

The Bible gives no hints on the matter of when the present civilization of the world will be consummated. The only forewarning that is given is "watch." And in watching we would be prepared at all times for the final coming of the Lord in His judgment on the present civilization of the world. Christians have now been watching for two thousand years.

Consider this for a moment. Paul revealed that God gave over

Noah's generation to serve their "vile passions" (Rm 1:26). Homosexually violates the original command of God to multiply and populate the earth. It is a "vile passion" that interrupts God's law of procreation. In the beginning, God commanded Adam and Eve, "*Be fruitful and multiply*" (Gn 1:22,28). When Noah and his family came out of the ark, they too were under the mandate to be fruitful and multiply (Gn 8:17). The LGBT "Q" members of society work against this mandate. If everyone of society adopted this behavior, then societies around the world would naturally go out of existence because no new generations would be produced to carry on with the population of the world. To a great extent, but not according to the thinking of homosexuality, some great civilizations of the world as China and Japan are sitting with an aged population that cannot be supported by a diminished younger population of laborers. Because of the practice in China of the one-child family, or simply discouraging reproduction within a society through childbirth as in Japan, there are not enough young workers in these societies to support the older generation.

Add to this the moral digression of homosexuality that is now worldwide. What righteous preacher is not vexed today by the intimidation of the LGBT community within society? There are many preachers who are intimidated about preaching on the immortal practice of homosexuality. This is a particular problem in democratic societies. Since the movement of LGBT has become a strong movement around the world, being promoted by Hollywood films and the liberal news media, then all the politicians of those affected societies have submitted to this social dysfunction. The politicians must submit to the influence of the LGTB community if they want to be voted into office.

But the influence of what Paul explained in Romans 1:26,27 goes beyond individual democratic countries. The LGBT influence has now spread around the world as a malignant virus. World organizations that depend on the financial contributions of Western powers must now submit to the intimidation of the LGBT community of those contributing Western powers. If a particular country seeks aid from a particular world organization that is funded by the LGBT West, then the asking country must submit to the "human rights" definition of the LGBT West.

In reference to giving up the God of creation who is revealed in the Bible, the propagation of the theology of evolution has permeated the educational institutions of the world. Believers in the God of the Bible once referred to evolution as a philosophy, which indeed it was and is. However, the philosophy has since evolved into being an uncontested fact of science, and the premise upon which all scientific research must now be interpreted. In the religious world, evolutionists have sought some respectability to remain somewhat scientific, and yet somewhat religious. These compromised scientists and religionists are referred to as “theistic evolutions.” There are few preachers throughout the “developed” world who would preach against this theology. They will not because many of their contributing constituents who are sitting before them in their audience every Sunday believe in the theology of theistic evolution.

As a theology, evolution has become the foundation upon which many civilizations now rest. The moral values of these civilizations are established on one of the primary teachings of evolution, that is, the survival of the fittest. Even in the coronavirus pandemic that has spread around the world, the evolutionist believes that this is nature’s system of preserving the fittest, while causing the death of the unfit. Since the greater majority of those who die are the aged and the underprivileged, it is believed by the evolutionist that this is nature’s medium by which the fittest are allowed to survive. This indeed is the theology of the evolutionist.

Since the theology of evolution now establishes the world view of a great number of citizens of the present world civilization, then practices as abortion are morally justified according to the law of any land. There is no moral conscience about ripping unborn children from the womb of their mothers, if the mothers life can be advanced economically and socially. This hedonistic practice is now considered a human right, that is, one human terminating the life of another human in the womb of a woman. Such a practice is judged by the courts of the land to be morally right upon the principle that the rights of the expectant mother are greater than the rights of the unborn child. In comparison to the society of Nazi Germany, this was the world view of those Nazi

leaders who had hijacked the German society. In order for their ruling society to advance, the Jews had to be eliminated from society.

The entire world, therefore, is identifying more with the civilization that existed before Noah. According to our Bible dictionary on the matter, we are further gone than we think. There are particular societies of the world that have already gone after the moral dysfunction of Sodom and Gomorrah. But when the entire world adopts the “evil passions” defined by the LGBT social order of a society, as well as evolutionary theology, then the world has lost its purpose for existence. The civilization that existed before Noah, and of which we are reminded by the Holy Spirit in Romans 1, should be a warning that all is not well in our world today. We would always be ready, as Paul and Peter urged, for the consummation of all that we now know.

Chapter 6

THE UNKNOWN JUDGMENT

We have found that those who are obsessed with the “end-of-times” find it difficult to rightly divide the word of God in reference to God’s judgments that have transpired in time. For whatever motives, these speculators find it difficult to read through the judgments of God in time without some rapturous conclusions that all the judgments of God in time refer exclusively to the end of time. In their excitement to create what seems to be a following that is based more on fear, than gospel, they divert the focus of the people away from a loving Jesus in order to fear for themselves. They lead people to believe that the world seems to be all out of control of the King of kings.

But we would challenge such speculators to read again the ministry of the Old Testament prophets as these prophets sought to deter the doom of Israel in time. As the prophets of God sought to turn Israel away from apostasy, these prophets, as Amos, cried out in vain. It seems that the people had no idea that their apostasy from God would result in their going into captivity. We only know the result of their apostasy, and thus the true meaning of the prophets’ message to an apostate nation, because we are standing on this side of all the histori-

cal events. This brings us to the prophetic ministry of Amos, a man as Noah, who stood alone to proclaim in time events that would soon transpire in time in the history of Israel.

There is something very unique about the prophecy of Amos that may be just as relevant today as it was when delivered in the eighth century B.C., probably around 760 B.C. This date is strategic in reference to the importance of the message. Since there was an eclipse of the moon in 784 B.C., and again in 763 B.C., the ministry of Amos to the northern kingdom of Israel took place around one or the other of these two eclipses (Am 8:9). Most Bible students believe the time of his ministry was in reference to the second eclipse.

Why this is important is the fact that in 722/21 B.C. the northern kingdom of Israel was terminated forever when the Assyrians defeated and took the Israelites of the northern kingdom of Israel into Assyrian captivity. Amos preached to a generation of morally bankrupted Israelites who lived forty years before the end of the northern kingdom.

God was giving the apostate Israelites another forty years before He came crashing down on them in judgment, which judgment terminated forever the northern ten tribes of Israel as a distinct nation. The Assyrians scattered the survivors of the 722/21 B.C. defeated nation throughout the nations over which they controlled at that time. Only in 536 B.C. would a small remnant of the descendants of each tribe of these Israelites return to the land of Palestine.

Now in view of such a tragic end, what would we think God would say to these people who had given up on Him? The first statements that came from the lips of the farmer prophet Amos were, *“The Lord will roar from Zion and utter His voice from Jerusalem. Then the pastures of the shepherds will mourn and the top of Carmel will wither”* (Am 1:2). Because of their sin, national doom was coming! Termination was in the wind. The Lord judged, *“I will not turn away its punishment”* (Am 1:3). In his document of the account of God’s judgment, Amos first explained that all the surrounding nations would suffer the same punishment for their sins (See Am 1:3 – 2:5).

Since we would need a description of the moral degradation of a nation that would bring upon itself such judgment from God, the Holy

Spirit provided us with the context of Amos 2:6-16. What is scary about the Lord's purpose in bringing judgment upon this Israelite kingdom is strikingly similar to many nations throughout the world today. This leads us to consider whether God is still working among the nations of the world today as He did among the nations of Amos' day, particularly Israel.

In the historical context of Amos, Israel suffered from moral degradation and political corruptness. The poor were marginalized by the rich, and the rulers oppressed the people (See Am 3:1-15). The people had gone beyond repentance because they had no conscience about their own moral bankruptcy (See Am 5:1-13). They had forsaken all standards of moral behavior, for they had forgotten the law of God (See Hs 4:6). So in less than forty years from the time of Amos' ministry, the day of the Lord (judgment) came upon them (See Am 5:18-27). The preacher Amos would be dead by the time of the judgment in 722/21 B.C. Nevertheless, all the doom that he had preached against the northern kingdom of Israel came to pass.

Now here is the point: The tragedies that the Lord brought upon the people prior to the day of the Lord when they would be taken away into captivity, did not inspire them to turn from their moral decay. **They did not respond to the national calamities that had come upon them during the preaching of Amos because they did not realize that the calamities were sent directly from the Lord.** Amos asked two questions that the righteous could answer, but not the morally corrupt: "*Will a trumpet be blown in the city and the people not be afraid? If a calamity occurs in a city has not the Lord done it?*" (Am 3:6). Because they had fallen so far from the Lord, they were clueless in reference to any warnings that would signal their need for repentance. They refused to accept the fact that the Lord had sent the calamities in order to stimulate repentance. In fact, they had moved so far from God that God was not a part of their world view. They were as those during the time when Noah preached to his generation. The unrepentant did not understand until it was too late (Mt 24:39).

God is fair. "*Surely the Lord God will do nothing without first revealing His plans to His servants the prophets*" (Am 3:7). But when

the audience is clueless in reference to any warnings from a God in whom they no longer believe, the people are not driven to repentance. There are no calls for national prayers by a godless generation. When people lose any accountability to God, then there is no such thing as repentance in the society. Repentance assumes that there is a divine standard to which we all must repent. But when God is removed from the thinking of the people, then there is no such thing as a moral standard to which the people must return. There is no call for prayer. It is then that the people are morally gone. In such a state of moral depravity were the people at the time of Amos (See Hs 4:6). The same was true of the generation of Noah's day that God purged from off the face of the earth. If there were calls for prayer, then citizens of each doomed society prayed to a god they had created after their own imagination just as the Baal prophets who confronted Elijah (1 Kg 18:17-46).

Now we are intrigued. We begin to understand why God works among generations of people in order to terminate the ungodly. In reference to the northern kingdom of Israel, notice that the "stock market" of the people would crash during all the social trauma that would come upon them. "*Behold, the days will come on you when He will take you away with hooks and your prosperity with hooks*" (Am 4:2). God had, even in the famine of the land at the time Amos preached, taken away their jobs and food. And yet, "*You have not returned to Me*" (Am 4:6). God was responsible for taking away the rain, thus causing famine. "*Yet you have not returned to Me*" (Am 4:9-11). Therefore, since they could not repent, for they had moved morally so far away from that to which they should return, there was only one last message to a people who could not connect the dots between national calamities and the coming judgment of God: "*Prepare to meet your God, O Israel*" (Am 4:12).

The people just could not understand that all the national calamity from which they were suffering was sent from God. Since they had given up on God, it was impossible for them to even consider the fact that there was a God who could do such things. Does this sound familiar?

The Lord sent the locust plague upon the people to crash their

economy (Am 7:1). There were great forest fires throughout the land, but the people still could not connect the dots (Am 7:4). The people failed to measure up to the standard by which they would be morally preserved because they had forsaken all moral standards of God (Am 7:7-9). They certainly did not measure up to the standards by which God would protect and preserve them as a nation.

It is significant to note that at the beginning of Amos' ministry, even Amos did not understand that all the national calamity that was taking place at the time was caused by the Lord. Therefore, **the Lord had to reveal to him who brought all the calamity upon the people** (Am 7:7). Because Amos himself had no clue concerning the future termination of the northern kingdom of Israel, the Lord had to reveal to him also that *"the end has come on My people of Israel"* (Am 8:2).

Both the prophet and the people were unaware that the existing national calamities that were upon the people was the judgment of God against them because the nation as a whole had become morally degenerate and atheistic in reference to the one true and living God of heaven.

The end of the nation, therefore, was upon them. With doomsday horror we thus read the following inscription of the Lord, being fearful that we may be in the same condition and situation: *"Behold the eyes of the Lord God are on the sinful kingdom, and I destroy it from off the face of the earth"* (Am 9:8). The Lord continued through Amos, *"All the sinners of My people will die by the sword, those who say, 'The calamity will not overtake or confront us'"* (Am 9:10). Though the statements were made in reference to a particular society, as were statements that were made in reference to Sodom and Gomorrah, they are similar to those pronouncements of judgment that Enoch made in reference to the entire world prior to the flood (Jd 14,15).

Nevertheless, in the midst of the national tragedy through which the northern kingdom of Israel would go, there was a light at the end of the tunnel. The Lord promised, *"I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob"* (Am 9:8). The Lord continued to promise, *"I will bring again the captivity of My people of Israel and they will build the ruined cities and inhabit them. And they will plant vineyards and drink their wine. They will also make gardens and eat the fruit of them"* (Am 9:14).

This was the same hope that God gave to Noah. He and his family would survive. All Christians who are alive at the time when the Lord comes in judgment on this world will survive (1 Th 4:13-18). There is a new heavens and earth in store for those who live by faith. It will be an environment wherein dwells righteousness (2 Pt 3:13).

The people of Amos' generation would suffer through a tremendous national calamity. However, good times would eventually come after enduring the punishment of their captivity. Their repentant descendants would return to the land. This story is thus continued in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. A remnant of the people did return to the land in 536 B.C., and life carried on until the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. We also must have hope. Though God will again bring the civilization of this present world to an end, we will not suffer such a fate as did the unrepentant of Amos' generation. A faithful remnant of every generation that has lived on earth will inherit the eternal "promised land."

Chapter 7

THE SHAKING

There is nothing like national or international pandemics or wars to draw out of the theological woodwork numerous prognosticators and their "end-of-time" pronouncements. This is so because such self-appointed prophets of doom often seek a following by instilling fear in the hearts of those who trust in their word. Such prophets existed before the revelation of the gospel, and they continue to exist in the religious world even to this day.

If someone today is seeking to frighten people into obedience through prognostications of "end-of-time" pronouncements, then that person has difficulty understanding the true reassuring power of the gospel in which we now stand. He has forgotten that our primary motivation for being disciples of Jesus Christ is based on our gratitude of the gospel of the incarnate Son of God. It is simply a diverted motive to be frightened into obedience of the gospel.

All other motivations for becoming a disciple of Jesus, therefore,

are diversions in comparison to our response to the awesome love that was revealed on the cross. In fact, a young disciple who was at the foot of the cross, and into whose care was entrusted the blessed woman who brought into the world the crucified Savior who was at the time nailed to the cross for us, once wrote, *“We love because He first loved us”* (1 Jn 4:19). Our loving gratitude for the eternal deed of the cross must find its expression in our response to the cross. And there is no fear in a loving response to the love of God that was expressed on the cross. In fact, the one who adopted the mother of Jesus, later wrote, *“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has torment. He who fears is not made perfect in love”* (1 Jn 4:18).

There is reassurance in our hearts in all world calamities we might have to endure in this life because we understand the present gospel reign of King Jesus and His love for us to deliver us from this environment. Therefore, we have tremendous love for our King, and thus remain in a loyal obedient relationship with Him in reference to His commandments. For this reason, the apostle Paul revealed in the following statement his personal response to the gospel reign of King Jesus: *“Knowing the fear of the Lord we persuade men”* (2 Co 5:11). We have this unquenchable desire to be fearful for those of this world, and thus we seek to bring every soul into the security of the gospel that we enjoy.

The same apostle who wrote the preceding statement, also wrote the following in reference to the reassurance we experience as obedient subjects of the kingdom reign of the King of kings: *“For you have not received a spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption by which we cry, ‘Abba, Father’”* (Rm 8:15). As we walk in obedience to King Jesus, we walk with the reassurance that comes to us through His grace. We are assured that He will forgive us of all our sins as we continue with Him on this earthly journey (1 Jn 1:7). We will not fear during any earthquake, tornado, hurricane or virus.

As the disciples of Christ, we know the awesome authority of the judgment of our King. But because of the gospel of grace that we have obeyed, we have confidence in His redeeming blood. Therefore, we do

not fear the Judge, nor do we fear during any calamities that occur in this world over which He has control. We preach the gospel because we know what the Judge will do to those who do not fear (obey) Him (See 2 Th 1:6-9).

We must understand the preceding in the context of the scope of this book. We must firmly believe that King Jesus has all things in control, regardless of what calamities we must endure as a result of any geological or biological attacks from the environment that make our journey in this world sometimes uncomfortable. Therefore, when the Bible speaks of the shaking power of the Creator and Judge of all things, we must understand His awesome power to shake all things in our present environment in order to accomplish the purpose for which He created the world. This was the contextual meaning of what Paul wrote in the following statement: “*We know that all things work together for good to those who love God*” (Rm 8:28).

When this world of humanity turns away from the purpose for which it was created, then it is time to shake humanity back into realizing the existence of the Creator of all things. In the process of this shaking, Christians must not lose sight of the fact that the Creator is shaking things back into some godly order. Nevertheless, though God has at times shaken civilization throughout history in order to accomplish His purposes, when He can no longer accomplish His purpose by disturbing humanity and our environment, then it is time to start expecting some finalization of all things.

The failure of the present-day prognosticators with their end-of-time fear tactics is that without an exception, they often fail to understand the historical context of the “shakings” of the Lord throughout history, particularly in reference to God’s people in the Old Testament. The word “shaking” is used several times throughout the Old Testament in reference to God directing a remnant of His people to the eventual fulfillment of gospel promises. However, if we do not understand the immediate historical context when those particular “shakings” took place, then we will invariably misunderstand the purpose for which the Lord shakes humanity today. Those who are obsessed with the end of the world unfortunately make this common mistake in their hermeneu-

tics. It is for this reason that we must understand the historical context of the people whom the Lord shook in the past in order to remind ourselves of our Creator and the reason why we are on this earth.

Therefore, we would caution every student of the Bible not to be caught up in the present fanaticism that the present shaking of humanity throughout the world is some indication of the end of the world. All “shakings” in the Bible were in reference to purposes God sought to accomplish in time. They were not sent to signal the end of times. If we use the Bible as our “dictionary” to define the metaphor of a “shaking,” then we cannot conclude that any “shaking” in time is a specific sign of the end of time. This is true because all of God’s “shakings” in the Old and New Testaments referred to something that took place **in time**.

It is a fact that the Lord allows **natural shakings** to occur throughout history. Sometimes, He directly causes the “shaking,” which was the case in the days of Amos. When He directly caused that “shaking,” He had to raise up a prophet to let the people know that the calamity that had befallen the northern kingdom of Israel was caused directly by Him. But we affirm that God no longer raises up special prophets to identify His “shakings.” Because of the inspired record of His “shakings” in the Old Testament, He assumes that all believers today have enough sense—at least biblical sense—to conclude that He is still at work in our world today. We need no special prophet to rise up among us and reveal that God continues to work in the affairs of this world. The fact is that He never ceased to so work. If someone would rise up to be a self-proclaimed God-sent prophet, then we know that such a preacher is a prognosticator, not a God-called prophet as Amos. The self-proclaimed prophet thus speaks presumptuously if he claims to be a God-called prophet as Amos.

Therefore, this is where we must be cautious. God personally called Amos to inform the people concerning the origin of the natural calamity that came upon the people of his day. In other “shakings” in the Old Testament, God directly inspired prophets to reveal that a particular “shaking” was sent directly from Him in order to accomplish something in reference to the preservation of a faithful remnant until the entrance of the Son of Man into this world. Therefore, unless a prophet

is raised up directly by God and inspired by the Holy Spirit to identify that a particular “shaking” has been sent directly from God, then we must assume that any “shaking” that we must endure in these times is simply the occurrence of either the natural or biological laws of this world in which we live. When the “shaking” involves war, then we know that man is the cause, not God. When warring groups came against Israel in the Old Testament, it was war that God allowed. We must believe this regardless of our belief that God continues to work behind the scene of natural laws in order to accomplish the same purpose of all His “shakings” that He brought directly upon the world from the beginning of time.

Natural occurrences (“shakings”) usually accomplish the same result as the directly imposed “shakings” that God used in the past in order to produce fear in the hearts of the people. But we must affirm that since the days when King Jesus came in judgment on national Israel in A.D. 70, **there have been no prophets directly called by God to identify a particular natural shaking to have been sent directly from God.** If a presumptuous prophet would seek to rise up among us to supposedly speak by the Holy Spirit to identify that a particular “shaking” is sent directly from God, then we must assume that that person is not a true prophet. He or she is a self-appointed prognosticator who seeks to create fear in the hearts of men, often for his or her own profit.

The true believer simply understands that we are in the bondage of a natural world that is groaning, as we, for deliverance from this present state of existence. This is the thought that the apostle Paul revealed in reference to our present bodily state in a physical world that is subject to the laws of nature, both biological and geological:

For the creation was made subject to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who has subjected it in hope, because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors together until now in pains of birth. And not only that, but ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body (Rm 8:20-23).

It is time to take another look at the preceding statement, realizing that every natural or biological catastrophe of this present world is a reminder that both the earth and ourselves groan for deliverance from this present state of existence. It is not that we need a prophet as Amos to rise up and tell us it is so. It is that we as believers realize that King Jesus upholds all things by the word of His power (Hb 1:3). And though it may seem that all things are out of control, by faith we must conclude that He always has everything under control. We remember the following statement by the Holy Spirit:

*You have put all things in subjection under His feet. For in subjecting all things to Him, **He left nothing that is not put under Him.** But now we do not yet see all things put under Him (Hb 2:8).*

Chapter 8 IDENTIFYING A SHAKING

In order to guard ourselves from being deceived, we must allow the Bible to be our final dictionary in reference to establishing our world view. If one today would rise up and claim a supposedly inspired proclamation to be directly given to him by the Holy Spirit, then we must use the Bible to determine if such a self-proclaimed prophet is simply being presumptuous. Even before the close of the first century the Holy Spirit gave us the following warning: “*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, **because many false prophets have gone out into the world***” (1 Jn 4:1). In conjunction with this, we must never forget the warning that God gave to His people Israel when they were about to enter the land of promise:

*When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not follow or come to pass, that is the thing that the Lord has not spoken. **The prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You will not be afraid of him** (Dt 18:22).*

The principle that is mandated in the preceding statement must not be ignored. It must not because throughout history there have been and always will be those who seek to highlight themselves by speaking presumptuously in times of either social or national calamity. These self-pronounced prophets will always arise among us during times when the Lord finds it necessary to “shake” a society or civilization in order to bring us back into spiritual alignment with that which will preserve humanity. We learn this from the examples of God seeking to wake up the spiritual side of His people throughout Old Testament history.

Amos was such an “awakening” prophet. However, he was first proved to be a true prophet by the fulfilled proclamations that he made according to the preceding test of a prophet. He had no right to be heard as a prophet of God unless the prophecies he spoke came to pass. If he were not proved to be a prophet by fulfilled prophecy, then he would have been a false prophet. Therefore, he had no right to speak about those things that were beyond the common knowledge of the people unless God first proved him to be a true prophet. We would ask no less from the self-proclaimed prophets of today.

We will not listen to anyone whose presumptuous prophecies are unfulfilled. We will speak only when the Bible clearly speaks on a matter. In those areas where we can voice only our opinions, then we will often speak, but we will let the people know that we are simply voicing our opinions. And such we are often doing in the context of how God now works in the affairs of man. We have not been inspired by God to tell the people that our opinions are sent directly from Him.

A. Historical timeline:

Sometimes just one word or phrase in Scripture is enough to dispel a most commonly held theology. In the context of any discussion concerning God working in the affairs of man, a commonly quoted phrase is found in Hebrews 12:26, which is a quotation of Haggai 2:6. Haggai prophesied in reference to the work of God among humanity, *“Yet once again in a little while I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land.”* By quoting this same passage from the

Greek Septuagint of the Old Testament, the Hebrew writer stated in reference to Haggai's prophecy, "*And this word, "Yet once more," signifies the removing of those things that can be shaken, as of things that are created, so that those things that cannot be shaken may remain"* (Hb 2:27).

The Hebrew writer evidently assumed that there would be speculators today who would twist the Haggai 2:6 prophecy in order to make it refer to events leading up to the end-of-time in reference to the removal of the present world. Therefore, because he did not want to be misunderstood in reference to his quotation of the prophecy, he sought to emphasize the statement, "*Yet once more.*" However, the Haggai quotation in Hebrews reads, "*Yet once again.*" If one is not obsessed with all the present-day hysteria concerning end-of-time speculations, then he or she will notice a point in this quotation that is revealed in a change of a word of the Haggai prophecy in the Hebrews quotation.

We must first understand that in the phrase, "*yet once again,*" or "*yet once more,*" there is the assumption that the reader can deduct that there were many times **before** the "shaking" under consideration by the Hebrew writer, that God shook the heavens and the earth. God's "shaking" that was coming had previously happened many times in the past. "Once more" assumes that at least there were "shakings" in the past that would be evidence of the same that would occur in the future of his readers. In fact, the power of the Hebrew writer's use of the metaphor finds its substance in the many "shakings" of the past.

B. The past shakings:

When the Bible speaks of "shaking," the metaphor was originally taken from the harvest practice of shaking the chaff out of the grain, as well as the shaking of the earth in an earthquake. In reference to an earthquake, Isaiah wrote, "*He arises to shake terribly the earth"* (Is 2:19; see Is 2:21). The Lord shakes the earth in order to bring down obstructions. The power of the earthquake is overwhelming, and thus strikes fear in the hearts of men. This is the substance of the metaphor. Therefore, Ezekiel could use an earthquake as a metaphor to symbolize

God's impact on the emotional state of humanity when He shook the environment of humanity: *"All the men on the face of the earth, will shake at My presence. And the mountains [obstacles of man] will be thrown down and the steep places will fall, and every wall will fall to the ground"* (Ez 38:20).

When God shakes the earth, both humanity and the physical world submit to His power. Realizing that this power should strike fear in the hearts of all men, and thus bring submission in the presence and power of God, God has intentionally shaken the heavens and earth throughout the history of mankind. When the metaphor "shaking" is used, we must understand that God was seeking to get the attention of those He shook in order to accomplish His spiritual goals for humanity.

In reference to the shaking of the chaff out of the grain of the harvest, the metaphor focuses on shaking the grain in order to separate the grain from the chaff, and thus discard the chaff while preserving the grain. In reference to Amos' prophecy concerning the captivity of the northern tribes of Israel, the Lord stated, *"For behold, I will command and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like grain is sifted in a sieve, yet a kernel will not fall to the ground"* (Am 9:9). The shaking of the Assyrian captivity was God's way of sifting the faithful remnant out of the apostate northern kingdom of Israel.

The farmer shakes the sieve in order to sift out the chaff, but save the grain. In reference to the many "shakings" that God did with Israel throughout their history, the purpose for the national calamities of shaking was defined by Ahijah in reference to a "shaking" in time in the history of the nation of Israel:

For the Lord will smite Israel as a reed is shaken in the water. And He will root up Israel out of this good land [of Palestine] that He gave to their fathers. And He will scatter them beyond the River [to Assyria and Babylon] because they have made their Asherim [Baal gods and their prophets], provoking the Lord to anger (1 Kg 14:15).

Throughout the history of Israel there were many "shakings." In their historical context, the "shaking" meant that the Israelites would

go into both Assyrian and Babylonian captivity in order to be cleansed. They would be taken out of the land of Palestine in order to be sifted clean of their religious gods and prophets that they had imagined, and whom they followed, which idolatrous gods and prophets led them away from God. As the civilization of humanity before the flood of Noah's day, the apostates of Israel had given up on God. They discarded the one true and living God from their minds, choosing rather to create gods and religious behavior after their own lusts. For this reason, God would discard them through captivity. Their shaking as a nation on many occasions, therefore, resulted because they forsook God.

When they forsook God, they forsook His standard of morality. When a nation does this, then it is due for a good shaking. When a world does this, as in the case of the civilization that existed before the days of Noah, then it is time for God to shake heaven and earth and start over again. We must not forget that within the purpose of God's "shaking" of humanity, He seeks to generate a moral restoration through a restored faith in Him. If the shaken society, or civilization is beyond repenting, then it is shaken out of existence. Such happened to Noah's generation. The same happened to the generation of both the apostate northern and southern kingdoms of Israel. Those who were taken into captivity from those kingdoms died in captivity. Only their children eventually comprised the remnant that returned to the promise land.

C. Israel's continued shaking:

The timeline of the Old Testament statements concerning God's shaking is very important. When the Hebrew writer stated, "*Yet once more,*" the indication is not only that there had been "shakings" before the one that was coming in the context of the Hebrew readers, **but also the fact that there were many more "shakings" before this coming final "shaking" that is in the prophecy of Hebrews 12:26.** Since Haggai 2:6,7 is quoted in Hebrews 12:26, then we must understand the prophecy of Haggai first in the context in which the prophecy was originally made.

It is necessary to understand the difference between the reading of

the prophecy of Haggai 2:6 and the Holy Spirit's quotation in Hebrews 12:26 that is from the Greek Septuagint. There is a slight difference in the reading because the Hebrews 12:26 reading in our New Testaments is a quotation from the Greek Septuagint text that was a translation from the Hebrew text. Therefore, it must be noted that the English translation of the Hebrew text in Haggai 2:6 reads, "*Yet once **again**.*" The Hebrews reading is, "*Yet once **more** I will shake not only the earth, but also heaven*" (Hb 12:26). Both readings are essentially the same in meaning, but we might assume a slight difference in emphasis, depending on the translation that one is using.

The Holy Spirit assumed that we would notice an important emphasis of the two readings. "Once again" assumes that there were "shakings" in the past, which "shakings" indicated that again in the future from the time Hebrews 12:26 was written, there would be one more shaking. But in reference to this "shaking," the Hebrew writer wanted us to understand **that this would be the final "shaking" that would be caused directly by God in reference to national Israel.**

"*Yet once more*" in the Hebrews 12:26 statement assumes finality in reference to "shakings." There were several "shakings" by God in the past, but there would be, in the historical context of the time the book of Hebrews was written, one more "shaking" that was brought about directly by God. After this "shaking," there would be no more "shakings" that would be brought into the world **as a direct act of God** upon the physical and biological world of humanity.

However, this does not discount the fact that there would be natural calamities that would emotionally shake societies, or the world as a whole. These "shakings" often accomplished the same result as those "shakings" that were caused directly by God. Since the final "shaking" about which the Hebrew writer wrote, there have been many natural calamities throughout the world that have caused us to be reminded that we live in a fragile history of the world, and that we live in an environment over which we have no control. However, none of these "shakings" since the final "shaking" of Israel, were a prelude to the final coming of Jesus and the end of the world. (This point will be covered more in detail in a following chapter.)

But in reference to the Hebrews 12:26 “shaking,” the Hebrew writer sought to call our attention to all those “shakings” that occurred throughout the history of Israel in the Old Testament that were caused directly by God. Specifically, we must understand the reason why God shook Israel, and what He wanted to accomplish by bringing social upheaval among His people. By understanding the past “shakings” of Israel, the Hebrew writer in addressing fellow Jews at the time he wrote these things to them, assumed that his readers would understand that God had a purpose in the “shaking” of national Israel that was soon to occur.

We must not forget that these were “shakings” **in time**, and thus we must conclude that the “shaking” to which the Hebrew writer referred was also a calamity that would again happen **in time in the history of national Israel**, not at the end of time. The Hebrew writer was not speaking of something that would happen at least two thousand years from the time he wrote the words of Hebrews 12:26. He was speaking of something that would transpire within the lifetime of those to whom he wrote the exhortation of Hebrews. His timeline was similar to Jesus’ prophecies concerning the end of national Israel which He mentioned would happen in the lifetime of some of His disciples (See Mk 9:1).

We must not allow a misunderstanding of Hebrews 12:27 to lead us away from the immediate historical context of those to whom the book of Hebrews was written. The writer reminded his immediate Jewish readers that the coming “shaking” signified “*the removing of those things that can be shaken.*” For example, the writer used a simile—“as”—to refer to the shaking “*of things that are created.*” Created things can be shaken by earthquakes. Things created (made) can be shaken into the depths of the sea (Ps 46:2). Even the physical nation of Israel was created by God and it too could be, and had been shaken many times throughout history. Other physical nations as Assyria and Babylonia were shaken out of existence by the time the Hebrew writer inscribed these words. Those nations, and many others, were gone at the time of writing. Their termination, therefore, became the metaphor of what was soon to happen to God’s long-standing relationship with Israel. The old covenant with Israel died at the cross (Cl 2:14), and

now it was time in history to manifest to the remaining unbelieving Jews that God's covenanted relationship with Israel was gone forever. As other nations that were shaken out of existence, it was now Israel's turn.

God had been patient with the unbelieving Jews for forty years. They had rejected His Son while He was on earth (Jn 1:11), and now it was time for them to be rejected by God. The purpose for their rejection from a covenant relationship with God was "*that those [spiritual] things that cannot be shaken [the church] may remain*" (Hb 12:27). The Hebrew writer then explained that since obedient Jewish Christians "*cannot be shaken,*" then we must show gratitude, which gratitude for God's grace over the past forty years has not come forth from those who rejected the incarnate Son of God (Hb 12:28).

In the Old Testament we discover what is meant by God's "shaking" of both His people and the nations around Israel. In both situations, the metaphor is that God causes a great social disturbance for the purpose of continuing His work with His creation. The psalmist explained, "*The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness. The Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh*" (Ps 29:8). If the people were inside a house during an earthquake, they would stand in the doorway, believing that the lintel of the doorway would protect them from the falling debris of the house. Because the northern ten tribes of Israel went into apostasy, Amos was called from his farm in order to pronounce the judgment of God. But notice the metaphor that Amos used in the following proclamation of God that there would be no safe place to go for deliverance from this judgment: "*Strike the lintel of the door so that the posts may shake. And break them on the heads of them all. And I will slay the last of them with the sword*" (Am 9:1). God would indeed shake down the house of Israel, and in the shaking, He would also take out the apostate Israelites.

There would be no safe place to hide from this shaking of the Lord. This shaking of the northern kingdom took place when the Assyrians overthrew the capital of Samaria, and subsequently took the northern kingdom of Israelites into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C. We must assume, therefore, in our understanding of the concept of God's

“shaking,” that God will always accomplish His purpose for shaking humanity. God does not shake people without bringing about His intended result.

In reference to Israel’s timeline, we must turn from the demise of the northern kingdom to the history of the southern kingdom of Israel. It too was shaken because of their idolatrous apostasy. The southern two tribes of Israel were shaken into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C.

However, God’s “shakings” in the Old Testament did not only apply to His judgment on His people, but also on those who took His people into captivity. Of the Babylonian captors, Isaiah prophesied, *“Therefore, I will shake the heavens and the earth will move out of its place at the wrath of the Lord of armies, and in the day of His fierce anger”* (Is 13:13).

Chapter 9 THE FINAL SHAKING

No nation or living creature can escape the fierce shaking judgment of God in time in reference to His plans for this world. God shakes all living creatures, nations and the earth for the purpose of bringing about the purpose for which He created the world and all mankind. He shook Israel in order to bring about the intended purpose for which he called Israel into existence to continue the seedline of Abraham that resulted in the Seed of woman, the Christ (See Gl 3:16). In order to remind us of this eternal purpose of God, Ezekiel was called to direct the thinking of the faithful remnant of Israel to another “shaking” that would happen in the years to come in their history:

The fish of the sea and the birds of the heaven, and the beasts of the field and all creeping things that creep on the earth, and all the men who are on the face of the earth, will shake at My presence. And the mountains [governments] will be thrown down and the steep places will fall, and every wall [of every city] will fall to the ground (Ez 38:20).

Israel was shaken by the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. The

nations who took Israel into captivity were themselves shaken in order that they release the seedline remnant of Abraham so that they might return to the promised land. This brings us to the time of the prophecy of Haggai, and the preceding prophecy of Ezekiel. After their captivity, it was time in the history of Israel to give the remnant of God hope for something that was coming in the future. Therefore, according to Haggai there was another “shaking” that was to come in the history of Israel. This was the “shaking” about which the Hebrew writer referred in Hebrews 12:26,27.

At the time of the prophecy of Haggai, the remnant of captives had returned to the land of promise and were to be prepared for the future. Haggai was called by God in order to encourage Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and Joshua the high priest (Hg 2:2). The Lord encouraged these two leaders of the returned remnant with the following exhortation, “*Now be strong*” (Hg 2:4). The Lord promised them, “*According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My spirit remains among you. Do not fear*” (Hg 2:5).

In the middle of the Lord’s encouragement that the people rebuild the physical temple in Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity, there was an implanted prophecy that would not be fulfilled until four hundred years later. The Lord promised, “*Yet once again in a little while I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land*” (Hg 2:6). The phrase, “a little while,” did not refer to something that would happen 2,400 years later, supposing that the “shaking” would be at the end of time with the final coming of the Lord Jesus. Neither did the statement refer to something that would take place in their lifetime. Since the Hebrew writer quoted this prophecy of Haggai, which quotation was made about thirty years after the ministry of Jesus, then we must conclude that there was yet one more “shaking” by which national Israel would be sifted in order to separate the chaff from the grain.

In the historical context of Haggai, Zerubbabel and Joshua, the Lord continued to historically contextualize the shaking that would come. Haggai continued, “*And I will shake all nations, and **they will come to the desire of all nations.** And I will fill this house with glory*”

(Hg 2:7). In the prophecy Haggai moved beyond the physical temple that the Israelite remnant was to rebuild. The physical temple would be a symbol of the temple of the spiritual house of the Lord that could not be shaken as those things of the created world. Isaiah explained: “*And it will come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord’s house will be established on top of the mountains, and will be exalted above the hills. And all nations will flow to it*” (Is 2:2). Both Haggai and Isaiah revealed that all nations would come unto the temple (church) of the Lord at sometime in the future from the time they prophesied. These would not be proselytes to Judaism. They would come to the “Lord’s house” that would be spiritual, not physical.

When the Lord eventually shook the nations with the gospel of King Jesus, it was then that the mountains of the nations came tumbling down. People from all nations submitted to the kingdom reign of the Son where there is “*neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither bond-servant nor free. There is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Gl 3:28). The final shaking of Israel began during the ministry of Jesus and continued until the consummation of national Israel in A.D. 70. The first part of the shaking was spiritual with the preaching of the gospel message by Jesus, and then after Acts 2, by the apostles. The second part of the shaking was physical when God openly rejected national Israel in A.D. 70. The patience of God prevailed during the forty years from the beginning until the end (See 2 Pt 3:9).

When the gospel went into all the world, it was then that the prophecy of Haggai 2 began to be fulfilled. The gospel brought all men under the kingdom reign of Jesus (See Dn 2:44; 7:13,14). This is the meaning of the following final words that the Lord gave to Haggai to deliver to the people: “*I will overthrow the throne of the kingdoms and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations*” (Hg 2:22).

A. One more “shaking”:

And now we come to the conclusion of God’s “shakings.” This brings us to the “shaking” of Hebrews 12 that in these times has “end-of-time” speculators trying to shake everyone in their boots. Unfortu-

nately, in their efforts to shake us by twisting the meaning of Hebrews 12, they are promoting the end-of-time in reference to the world. Unfortunately, these end-of-time prophets have simply missed the in-time “shakings” of Israel in order to bring about repentance, and finally, to reveal God’s rejection of national Israel in A.D. 70. They forget that the “shakings” of God were always in-time events that had in-time results. When we understand the purpose of why God shook people in time, then we can easily determine that the work of God to shake humanity never refers to end-of-time events. (More on this in the following chapters.)

Since Hebrews 12 is often used to refer to the final coming of Jesus and the end of the world, we must understand that the text was written about thirty years after Jesus made the pronouncements of the rejection of national Israel in Matthew 24, and only a few years before all these things came to pass. There is one statement in Luke’s parallel account of what Jesus said was coming in the lifetime of some of His disciples (See Mk 9:1). We must clearly understand this statement. In Luke’s record of Jesus’ prophecy of God’s final shaking of Israel, which was written less than a decade before the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70, Luke referred to an emotional state of the people that is always prevalent in the hearts of man every time God shakes humanity. Jesus prophesied that this state of emotional distress would exist among the Jews when Rome finally brought down judgment on the insurrectionist Jews of Palestine: *“Men’s hearts will be failing them **for fear**, and for expecting those things that **are coming** on the earth. For the powers of heaven will be shaken”* (Lk 21:26).

The “powers of heaven” (Rome) would be shaken in order to shake the chaff of unbelieving Israel from the grain of believers. The chaff (national Israel) would then be gathered up in Jerusalem and burned (See Mt 13:40). The seed (grain) of the kingdom of God would then continue unhindered by the chaff. After A.D. 70, there was never again any persecution of Christians by the Jews that was so prevalent during the forty years that led up to that date. During this “shaking,” it was the unbeliever who was in fear, not the believer. Christians always know

that their King is in control. Therefore, they do not fear when God is shaking things on earth. Those Christians who would fear have not yet been made perfect in love (See 1 Jn 4:18).

Jesus placed the fulfillment of that about which He spoke to occur **in time**, not at the end of time. This was a shaking in time because of *“those things that **are coming** on the earth”* at the time he spoke (Lk 21:26). But when the Holy Spirit spoke of the final coming of Jesus at the end of time, He revealed things that would happen *“**in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye**”* (1 Co 15:52). In reference to the end of time, Paul added, *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God”* (1 Th 4:16).

These are events that will take place instantaneously. When speaking of end-of-time events, the New Testament does not speak of events that would unfold gradually over a period of time. Regardless of how long it would take Rome to bring destruction upon national Israel, the day of the Lord in A.D. 70 was more than a 24-hour day. It was judgment that was planned in Rome, which judgment eventually came upon national Israel over a period of several months. This is certainly not within the instantaneous time frame of the events that will take place on the last day when Jesus comes again.

This introduces us to the text of Hebrews 10:26,27. The Hebrew writer was directing his words to those who were forsaking the kingdom reign of King Jesus. They were seeking to go back to live under the Jews’ religion of the day. Because of the intimidation of the radical Jews at the time in their efforts to restore national Israel, the Hebrew writer penned a document to save the lives of young Christian Jews who might be encouraged to take up a sword and head to Jerusalem in order to fight the Romans. At the time, there were nationalistic zealot Jews at work throughout the Roman Empire who were recruiting all Jews to go to Jerusalem on the Passover of A.D. 70 in order to consolidate their resistance against Rome. Strategically, it was also at that time that Rome planned that the Roman army should show up at Jerusalem.

The finality of the Hebrew writer’s arguments were based on the affirmation of Hebrews 10:39: **“But we [faithful Jews] are not of those**

[apostates] ***who draw back to destruction***, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.” If any Jew fell away from his or her allegiance to King Jesus, then there was only certain doom waiting in Jerusalem. God was again going to shake national Israel in order to separate the chaff from the grain. Through and after the destruction, Jesus had prophesied the result: “*Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*” (Mt 13:43). Once the tares were gathered up and burned, then the true grain would be revealed. It would be as Jesus said at the conclusion of the parable of the tares: “*Therefore, as the tares [unbelieving Jews] are gathered and burned in the fire [of the destruction of Jerusalem], so it will be at the end of this [national Israel] age*” (See Mt 13:40). (During the final weeks of the destruction, the Jewish historian Josephus stated that hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed by the Romans. The bodies of the dead were burned outside the walls of the city.)

When we read the statement of Hebrews 12:26,27 that was written only a few years before the calamity (shaking) that came upon national Israel in A.D. 70, we must understand that Jesus’ prophecy of Matthew 24 (Lk 21) was in the process of being fulfilled. About thirty years after the crucifixion of Jesus when the book of Hebrews was written, national calamity was indeed coming upon the Jews. Notice carefully how the Hebrew writer took the minds of the recipients of the letter back to God’s shaking of Israel in the past when Israel continually went into apostasy: “*See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they [apostate Jews] did not escape when they refused Him [Jesus] who spoke on earth, much less will we escape if we turn away from Him [King Jesus] who speaks from heaven*” (Hb 12:25). At the time this statement was made, King Jesus continued to speak from heaven through His apostles whom He sent into all the world (Mt 28:19,20).

In the context, the Hebrew writer spoke specifically of the incarnate Son of God speaking to national Israel during His earthly ministry. But during His ministry, the Jews rejected Him and His word. The writer then continued in Hebrews 12:26, “*His voice then shook the earth.*” The voice of Jesus shook the earth during His ministry on earth because His word became the standard by which all would be

judged both in time and at the end of time: *“He who rejects Me and does not receive My words”* Jesus reminded the obstinate Jews, *“has one who judges him. The word that I have spoken, the same will judge him in the last day”* (Jn 12:48). From the time Jesus ascended to the throne of God in heaven, until the time He comes again in the last day, it is the word of King Jesus that is the standard by which all are to be judged (At 17:30,31).

In the historical context of the recipients of the Hebrew letter, there would be another “shaking” after Jesus shook the earth with His personal words while He was on earth. *“Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also heaven”* (Hb 12:26). We must not miss the metaphors of this statement. Paul’s statement in Ephesians 1:20,21 is a needed commentary. The Father *“worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.”* It is there that King Jesus is *“far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named.”* Paul continued with his commentary on this matter in Philippians 2:9,10: *“Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven and those on earth and those under the earth.”* Jesus is now King of all nations of this world (1 Tm 6:15). He is King of all the realm of Satan (See 1 Pt 3:22). There is nothing outside His present kingdom reign.

The Hebrew writer continued to identify the obedient subjects of the kingdom reign at the time the Hebrew document was written. In view of all those kingdoms of the world that can be shaken out of existence, the obedient subjects of King Jesus *“are receiving [accepting] a kingdom that cannot be shaken”* (Hb 12:27). *“Those things that can be shaken”* were about to be taken away in A.D. 70. They were to be taken away in order to reveal those things that cannot be taken away. Therefore, *“let us show gratitude, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear”* (Hb 12:28). It is significant that the Hebrew writer concluded his exhortation in view of the fact of the fire that was soon to come upon Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70. *“For our God is a consuming fire”* (Hb 12:29).

B. Motivated by the main point:

At the time the Hebrew writer addressed his fellow Jews in less than a decade before A.D. 70, they were about to undergo a tremendous national calamity. Since the writer directed the letter of Hebrews primarily to the believing Jewish Christians, it is interesting to note the subjects on which he focused in order to encourage them to remain focused on Jesus. If we notice well his points of focus, it will deliver us from a great number of self-appointed prophets out there who are seeking to create a frenzy around their supposed end-of-time pronouncements. Sometimes it is necessary to note the message of a particular preacher in order to determine if he is either misguided, or simply a false prophet among us. The book of Hebrews is a masterful document to use in order to make this determination.

A reading of Hebrews easily proves the preceding point. In order to encourage the disciples of his time to remain stable and focused, the Hebrew writer directed the minds of his readers through the document in order that they continue to focus on the existing gospel ministry of Jesus from heaven. In chapters 1 & 2 he encouraged his readers to focus on the gospel of the incarnate Son of God who was greater than angels. He then focused on the incarnate Son dwelling among those who were loyal to Him in all things. In chapter 3 he reminded his readers that this incarnate Son was greater than the Moses who led the people of Israel to freedom fifteen hundred years before. The Hebrew writer then turned to the good news of the eternal rest that is prepared for those who remain faithful to King Jesus. And then moving into chapter 5, the writer exhorted his readers to grow in their personal faith in Jesus, trusting, as he concluded in chapter 6, in the gospel promises of God. And then in chapter 7 he turned to the gospel of the high priesthood of Jesus who now ministers on our behalf from heaven after the order of Melchizedek. As our high priest, the writer continued to explain in chapter 8, that this resurrected and ascended incarnate Son of God is now ministering the new covenant relationship that we now have with God. Therefore, in chapter 9, the readers were metaphorically portrayed as the spiritual tabernacle on earth who worship in hope

because they have been cleansed of sin by the blood of their crucified King of kings. And because of the gospel of His offering that was made once for all time on the cross, King Jesus mediates on our behalf in heavenly places. And in order to reassure his readers of this gospel offering, the writer in chapter 10 reminded his readers that the offering of the cross was sufficient and final for all time. Therefore, we must walk in gratitude of this gospel offering. In chapter 11, the writer then reminded his readers that they too must remain faithful as the Old Testament patriarchs did when they had to endure hard times during great calamity. They remained faithful even though they had no revealed knowledge of the gospel which was yet in their future. They endured great suffering in times of calamity, though they had no knowledge of the incarnate offering of the Son of God that was coming. And then only at the end of chapter 12 does the Hebrew writer bring up the subject of the former “shakings” of God throughout the history of Israel. The “shakings” throughout Israel’s history were the work of God to keep His people focused on the end result of His call of Israel. They were called into nationhood for the purpose of preserving the seedline of Abraham until the Seed came into the world. After one more “shaking,” the purpose for which the nation was called would finally be accomplished. Chapter 13 is a final encouragement for Christian Jews to remain faithful during the calamity that they were about to endure in the consummation of their national heritage.

We find it very interesting that throughout the entire document of Hebrews, the writer in only two verses mentions anything about a final “shaking” of God to come in the life of his readers. Though the Jewish readers were about to go through a tremendous ordeal in the national tragedy of the rejection of Israel, the writer did not through the book obsess over predictions concerning the end of time. If we would listen to some of the end-of-timers today, we would think that the entire book of Hebrews should have been written about the “signs of the times” in reference to some final “shaking.” But this was not the case.

We learn one very profound lesson from the book of Hebrews: **When we are enduring times of great national, geographical, or biological trauma in this physical world in which we dwell, we must**

focus on the gospel of the present ministry of Jesus and His kingdom reign as King of kings. Obsessing on any other subject is simply a diversion of Satan away from the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, by using the book of Hebrews in the New Testament we can identify those who are misleading the people by their end-of-time predictions over which they are usually obsessed.

Chapter 10 ARE WE ATHEISTS?

It is not the option of the Christian to simply read the statement of Genesis 6:5, and then consider the cleansing work of God with the flood of Noah's day as simply a global catastrophic event about which movies are made. On the contrary, the event poses a challenge for every Christian in reference to his or her world view. Every Christian must determine the reason for the flood. But specifically, every Christian must answer the question, Why did God allow man to become so wicked "*that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*" (Gn 6:5)? If we do not answer this question, then atheists have an argument against the belief that there is a God in the universe who is benevolent toward His creation.

Therefore, we must answer the question as to why God would allow humanity to morally digress to the point of being useless in reference to the purpose for which mankind was originally created. If we see the cleansing function of the flood of Noah's day simply as a historical event in the existence of humanity on the face of the earth, then we have ignored the entire purpose of the deluge itself. In fact, the unbelieving world today considers Christians somewhat childish concerning their belief in this supposedly "global fantasy."

Much unbelief arises from the fact that many Christians fail in two areas of study: (1) Christians fail to scientifically consider the evidence that a global flood actually occurred, and (2) Christians have failed to be consistent in their belief concerning the flood. Therefore, it is imperative that we consider why humanity reached the point of justifiable annihilation through the cleansing function of the flood. If we

do not, then our world view as Christians concerning the purpose of the gospel is greatly weakened. If we have no rational explanation for the flood, then the unbelieving world assumes that Christianity has its own fables that have been passed down from one generation to another. (For a scientific discussion of the global flood of Noah's day, see Book 26, *The Bible And Science*, Biblical Research Library, www.africainternational.org.)

The Christian supposedly believes in an all-good and benevolent God. He asserts, "*God is light and in Him is no darkness at all*" (1 Jn 1:5; see 1 Tm 6:16). This God can do no evil, and thus, He is not willing that evil should exist in this world, especially in the life of His people. Since this God is all benevolent, then there should also be no suffering in this world. And then we must consider in the context of this discussion why such a good God would bring upon the face of the earth the tragedy of the flood of Noah's day? And more relevant to our situation today, Why would this God allow disease and war to ravage civilization? If God is benevolent, then we wonder why there is so much evil and suffering in the world?

The Christian believes that his God is all-powerful (omnipotent). This God can do anything. There is nothing that the Christian's God cannot accomplish, especially on behalf of His people. The Christian confidently asserts, "*All things work together for good to those who love God*" (Rm 8:28). But in the real world in which the Christian lives, Christians suffer because "all things" are not working right. Christians often innocently suffer as a result of the evil that is present in the world. They suffer because of viruses that ravage humanity. Therefore, the Christian, according to the accusations of every atheist, now has a supposed contradiction in his faith.

The atheist poses the question to every Christian, If this God of yours can do anything, and at the same time He is supposed to be all good and benevolent toward humanity, and especially toward His own people, then why does evil and suffering exist in this world, especially in the lives of Christians? The atheist continues his onslaught against the Christian with a supposedly logical conclusion: (1) Since evil does exist, and God cannot do away with evil, then your God is not all-

powerful. (2) Since suffering exists in this world, and your God cannot do away with it in order that His people live in a world that has no suffering, then again, He is simply not all-powerful.

We would surmise that most Christians have no answer for these valid objections to their faith. We have discovered that most Christians have a “blind faith” that is based only on the heritage of their fathers, or the religious traditions of the day. But this **is not** the faith that is mentioned in Hebrews 11:1: “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*” Because many Christians cannot confidently argue the case for their faith in view of the attack of atheistic philosophies, their faith is often weak, and supposedly not valid in a scientific world of hard facts. But we believe this should not be the case.

Therefore, another look at the philosophical reality of the matter will begin our answer to the objections that most atheists pose against the faith of Christians. First consider the fact that evil and suffering do exist in our world. Now since evil and suffering exist, and God does not on His own volition do away with it, this does not necessary assume that God is not benevolent. Neither does it assume that He is not all good. The argument of the atheist is that evil and suffering cannot exist in the presence of a God who is supposedly all good. Since the Christian asserts that there is a God who exists parallel with the existence of evil and suffering, the atheist concludes that this is a logical contradiction. It is a logical contradiction, and thus the Christian’s belief in a benevolent God is simply wishful thinking.

Two opposed realities that contradict one another cannot be true. One or the other must be false. The atheist thus asserts that those who believe in the self-contradictory existence of evil and suffering, and at the same time believe in a benevolent God, are simply self-deceived because they supposedly believe in a logical contradiction. They are believing in two things that contradict one another. Therefore, they too should be atheists. If the reasoning of the atheist is valid, then all of us should be atheists. However, we believe that the existence of a benevolent God in a world of evil and suffering is not a logical contradiction. On the contrary, we believe that it is more reasonable to believe

in a God who is just and righteous in the presence of evil and suffering.

Therefore, we are inspired to deal with the supposedly self-contradictions with which we are presented by the unbelieving world. An honest view of the suffering of this world should at least shock us into reality in reference to our belief in God, especially His benevolent character. For example, if the God in whom we believe is supposedly benevolent and all-good, then why do we live in an environment of disease? According to those who study pandemics, an influenza pandemic occurs every 10 to 30 years somewhere throughout the world. Some say a pandemic occurs every 10 to 15 years. Throughout the history to modern times, there have been some very tragic viral pandemics. For example, from 1346 to 1353 it is estimated that anywhere from 75 to 200 million people died worldwide of what was referred to as the black plague (bubonic plague). Some have estimated that as many as a third of the population of Europe perished in the few years of this pandemic. Some have estimated that as many as 60% of the citizens of Florence, Italy died. The death toll from this plague was high because 80% of the infected victims died. And yet, the end of the world did not come during this pandemic. People continued to put their faith in a God who allowed such to happen.

Other viral pandemics have been likewise devastating to humanity. At the close of the 1700s, it is estimated that 400,000 people died every year from small pox. During the twentieth century, it is estimated that throughout the world 300 to 500 million people died from small pox. Fortunately, in December 1979 it was declared that this viral disease had been eradicated from the world. It has been the **only** viral disease that has been eradicated. But add to this the cholera pandemic that existed from 1817 to 1860. It is estimated that during this pandemic over 15 million people perished worldwide. But it was not the end of the world and people continued to put their faith in God.

And then there is the viral infection of measles. In the year 2000 alone, it is estimated that of the 40 million infections throughout the world, about 777,000 died. When the Europeans made their way across the Atlantic Ocean to the New World in the 1500s and 1600s, they took measles with them. This viral disease wiped out most of the civiliza-

tion of the Carib and Arawaks in the West Indies. It likewise decimated many of the tribal groups of the Amazon basin, plus the Inca and Aztec civilizations. These civilizations had no immunity against such viral infections, and thus succumbed to a virus that could not be seen.

The world still suffers with tuberculosis today. It is estimated that about 25% of the world's population has been infected with this virus today. There are about 8 million new infections of tuberculosis every year. Of these, it is estimated that approximately 2 million die annually worldwide. But there are no proponents today who state that the end of the world is predicated on the disease of tuberculosis. The faith of Christians continues to move them through this suffering every year.

Though not a viral disease, we would add the overwhelming suffering that has been caused by malaria. The best estimates of the World Health Organization is that there are from 350 to 500 million cases of malaria every year throughout the world. Some have estimated that about one million people die annually from this disease. Some historians have suggested that malaria was one of the causes that brought down the Roman Empire. It was so prevalent throughout the Empire that it was referred to as Roman Fever.

The history of pandemics throughout the centuries help give us a more realistic understanding of the Covid-19 virus that is spreading around the world today. The death rate from this virus is minuscule in comparison to many of the other viral infections that have devastated civilizations throughout the centuries. But our point is not the death rate caused during any specific viral pandemic. Our concern is the existence of such pandemics in reference to our belief in a benevolent God whom we believe is all-powerful, and thus, could do away with such a curse to human civilization. Our reference to such pandemics also infers that God does not use pandemics to indicate the end of the world. Pandemics are only a reminder that we live in a world that is cursed with disease as a result of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden.

So we question again, Is the Christians' belief in a God who allows pandemics to occur a logical contradiction in reference to Him being all-powerful while we claim Him to be benevolent? Is it possible for the Christian to believe in a "supposedly" all-good God who would

allow pandemics to occur throughout the centuries, which pandemics have devastated the population of the world for centuries? It is incumbent on all Christians to answer these questions, as well as answer the question the atheist poses to Christians for their belief in an all-powerful and all-good (benevolent) God.

We would also remind some overzealous preachers among us today to remember that God does not use pandemics to signal the end of the world. If He did, then He missed a few opportunities to do just that. From the time scientists have been noticing pandemics since the middle of the fourteenth century, the world has not come to an end. We would assume, therefore, that any self-proclaimed prophets today who would proclaim that an existing pandemic is a sign of the end of the world have actually identified themselves to be false prophets.

Chapter 11

WE ARE NOT ALONE IN COMPLAINT

If we believe that our circumstances are out of the ordinary, then we need to review our history as believers in the one true and living God. In the Old Testament, Gideon complained, “*O my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?*” (Jg 6:13). Habakkuk would add his question as to why God would allow the wicked to prosper: “*Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, and hold Your tongue when the wicked devours one more righteous than he?*” (Hk 1:13). And we suppose no person could have more justification to complain than Job. Because of his deplorable situation in which he eventually found himself, we would assume that he had a right to complain:

My soul is weary of my life. I will give free course to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God, “Do not condemn me. Show me where You contend with me. Is it good to You that You should oppress, that You should despise the work of Your hands and shine on the counsel of the wicked?” (Jb 10:1-3).

With all those people of faith throughout history who have com-

plained in their despair, at least we are in good company with them when we likewise complain about our present situation of suffering. However, in our complaints, which are often coupled with anxiety, we must not lose our power to reason through such matters. We must also never forget that when we are in a time of despair, one of the first cognitive powers to go is our ability to reason properly. Fearful people usually never come to correct conclusions. Therefore, the following points are some brief thoughts to consider during these times of great apprehension—we will spare you the accusation of being in great fear:

A. There must be natural laws.

If we were to live in a natural environment that would sustain humanity, then certainly this environment must be governed by natural laws. A world without natural laws, or inconsistent natural laws, would be a world of chaos. If we are to have rain upon our crops, then certainly there must be convection currents in the atmosphere. But sometimes these convection currents—that now occur after the flood of Noah’s time—build up to be thunderstorms, tornados and hurricanes. Of necessity, we must ride out the function of these natural events in order to enjoy life in a world that is controlled by natural laws, which laws we have often messed up on our own. Therefore, we must sometimes suffer the natural occurrences of the natural laws in which we live. When considered together, there is a great deal of suffering in the world because of the normal function of natural laws that sometimes afflict human habitation.

But we must not forget that natural laws are necessary in order to produce an environment in which a free-moral individual can live and make decisions. This environment in which we live, therefore, is the best of all possible environments for the survival of a human being. If one thinks that he could invent a better environment, then he must be challenged to think of a better environment than the one that now exists. Keep in mind that every time scientists want to colonize another planet, they must take along with them this environment in order to exist on planets as Mars.

B. God can do only that which can be done.

Now we must follow the logic here. There is no need to go into a lengthy discourse on the following reasoning. Our conclusion is that we are the best of all possible free-moral individuals who have the opportunity to live in the best of all possible environments for human habitation.

It is not necessary to discuss these points at length because these are logical thoughts that build upon one another: (1) God is love (1 Jn 4:19). Since we can love, then we conclude that we are the creation of a God of love. And in order for humans to cohabit with one another, they must have the ability to love one another. (2) In order for us to return love to a God of love, it is necessary that we have the freedom to make a choice to love. Our choice to love one another is the serendipity of our choice to love God. We cannot not be preprogrammed to love either God or one another. Robots cannot love. Therefore, in order for us to be truly free to love, we must be truly free to make our own moral decisions in reference to our relationships with both God and one another. (3) Because we exist as individuals who can choose to love, then it was necessary for God to create us with the ability to make choices of love. The God of love could not have created us with the ability to make choices of love without making us truly free to make moral decisions.

God can do only that which can be done. He cannot make round squares or hot ice. Likewise, **the creation of an individual who cannot freely choose to love God cannot be done.** Because we have choice, therefore, we must assume that we must live in a world of bad choices, and consequently, live in a world where a great deal of bad choices will be made. The evil that results from such bad choices cannot be attributed to God.

God allows people to freely make choices. But because an entire world gave up a knowledge of God at one time in the past, that entire world civilization habitually made bad choices (Gn 6:5). Unfortunately, when men give up a knowledge of God, they forget that God has also revealed that every individual will be held accountable for his or her choices (At 17:30,31; Hb 9:27).

And so we are reminded of the situation of Job who was subject to the evil choices of others. The evil that others committed against Job must find its source in the evil desires of others who gave their wills over to the motivation of Satan.

As Satan roamed around causing mischief among men, God said to him, “*Have you considered My servant Job?*” (Jb 1:8). But Satan accused, “*Have You not made a hedge around him and around his house and around all that he has on every side?*” (Jb 1:10). Therefore, even Satan realized that he could not voluntarily touch Job without the permission of God. This conclusion is assumed in Satan’s reply to the Lord. “*But put forth **Your hand** now and touch all that he has*” (Jb 1:11). After He had received permission from the Lord to use the supernatural power of God (Jb 1:12), it was then that Satan went forth in order to afflict Job. All supernatural power can be sourced only from God, for He only is the source of all that is supernatural. Satan has no autonomous supernatural power. Therefore, he had to be allowed to use the power of God in order to afflict Job.

But we, as Job, would complain why God would allow Satan to use His power in order to afflict humanity. The reason is that man must live in an environment wherein he can make choices between good and evil. He must live in an environment of natural law. Without this right to so live, then man is not truly a free individual with the ability to make moral choices in reference to the environment in which he lives. There must be no hedges around us through which Satan cannot pass without our invitation that he come into our lives. Satan goes about as a roaring lion, looking for those opportunities to be invited into one’s life in order to make havoc.

We must thus live in an environment in which choices can be made. This is necessary in order that God remain a just God in final judgment. If any accusation could be justly made against God for one being lost, then the justice of God is attacked. Since the God of love is just, then it is necessary that all humanity be truly free to make moral decisions. And in making these decisions, it is necessary that each one of us be held accountable for our decisions.

And herein are the logical conclusions. It was not possible for

God to create an individual who had the freedom to make moral choices, and yet, not create an environment in which those choices could be made. It was not possible for God to create an environment that would allow choices to be made, and yet create an individual who did not have the ability to make choices.

God could not create individuals with the ability to love, without putting them in an environment in which the individuals could lovingly interact with one another. Since we do exist, then it is logical to assume that our Creator produced the best of all possible environments in which we could live as individuals who could freely exercise our right to make choices.

Evil exists because of individuals who give up their knowledge of God, and thus sacrifice His moral values in order to establish their own. Since this is the best of all possible environments for the existence of a free-moral individual to make choices, then we must accept the fact that this physical world with all its suffering is worth the price of preparing our characters for an eternal dwelling in the presence of God. It is best to have lived and suffered, and then receive the reward, than to not have existed. Therefore, we look forward to an environment wherein the following will exist:

God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. And there will be no more death nor sorrow nor crying. Nor will there be any more pain, for the former things have passed away (Rv 21:4).

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ABBREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**