



# *discover eternity*

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*Uncover the new home that is being prepared for you  
where love and peace will be restored*

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You don't have to be a Bible-believing Christian to be pessimistic about humanity and human nature. The story of humanity is a story of wars, violence, hatred, exploitation and oppression. About 400 years before Christ, the Greek dramatist Aeschylus, wrote: *Alas for human destiny! Man's happiest hours are pictures drawn in shadow. Then ill fortune comes, and with two strokes the wet sponge wipes the drawing away.* About 2,400 years later, author James Joyce put these words in the mouth of a character: *History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.*

With our past so bad - and the present not a whole lot better - it's no wonder that people have speculated about what the future might be. And who among us, amid such speculating, hasn't been a bit anxious about what we might face either?

Interestingly enough, some of the most famous books depicting the future often portray it in rather nightmarish terms, as if the authors - so aware of human nature and its unrelenting capacity for evil - can't even imagine the future better!

## 1984

For instance, in 1949, George Orwell wrote his famous 1984, in which he depicted the world under the tyrannical rule of an absolute dictator called *Big Brother*. *Big Brother* constantly monitored the vast majority of people, and even a wrong thought by an individual was to be severely punished.

In the book, the thought police would get him just the same. He had committed - would have committed, even if he had never set pen to paper - the essential crime that contained all others in itself. *Thoughtcrime*, they called it. *Thoughtcrime* was not a thing that could be concealed forever.

You might dodge successfully for a while, even for years, but sooner or later they were bound to get you.

## BRAVE NEW WORLD

In 1932, Aldous Huxley published *Brave New World*, his vision of the future - AD 2540 - where people are mass produced in artificial hatcheries, negating the need for families or familial relationships. Individuality is not allowed, and people are programmed at birth for their specific status and role. As in Orwell's *1984*, *Brave New World* depicts a future under the complete dominance of an elitist tyranny that controls the minds and behaviour of everyone, allowing no room for free thought or individuality. In Huxley's vision, the masses are kept in line through various forms of mind control, including vast amounts of a drug, Soma.

## THE PAST AS PROLOGUE

Shakespeare once said, *What's past is prologue*, meaning simply that things tend to repeat themselves. If this is true, if all we have to look forward to is more of the same, we have no reason to think that the future is going to be any better than the past.

On the other hand, if you believe in the Bible, and the promises of the Bible, then you have every reason to believe that the future is going to be vastly different from the past, and that - after the Second Coming of Christ - nothing about this world is ever going to be the same again.

Here is a prediction that more of the same would be a popular idea before Jesus comes the second time.



***Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.***

*2 Peter 3: 3-4*

And if things keep on going in the future as they have in the past, we have every reason to be pessimistic, don't we? The whole point of the Bible promises about the future, about eternity, is that it is not going to be a mere continuation of the past - but a radical break with it.

## THE SECOND COMING

In the last study - *Discover Rescue* - we saw that the Second Coming of Jesus has been guaranteed by His first. The Creator of the universe didn't take upon Himself our humanity, and bear the sin, evil, and suffering of this world, only to leave us in this sin, evil and suffering. On the contrary, He has promised to come back and end it all, and forever too.

We saw, too, that despite popular notions about a secret coming, with the faithful taken quietly away to heaven while others remain wondering what-in-the-world happened, the Second Coming of Jesus is going to be a world-wide event that unfolds before everyone.



***Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him.***

*Revelation 1:7*

Nothing secret about this event, that's for sure.

## CHAFF

In fact, there is an amazing Old Testament prophecy about the Second Coming of Jesus, and what happens to the earth after it. The prophecy itself centres around an image of a man with a head of gold, arms and breasts of silver, a belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet and toes made of iron and clay, and finally a stone kingdom that fills the whole earth. See Daniel 2. The Bible gives the meaning of this prophetic image. It is the most amazing long range time prophecy in the Bible. It gives the succession of world empires from Daniel's time of 605BC till the end - Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome, which later broke apart into the nations of modern Europe today.

All those kingdoms came, just as predicted. The only one that hasn't, at least not yet, is the final one - God's kingdom - which arises only after all these worldly ones do. In the prophecy, God's final kingdom is presented as a giant stone that crushed the statue and leaves nothing of it behind.

The prophecy itself reads like this:



***This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the***

***stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.***

*Daniel 2:32-35*

Daniel then interprets the prophecy, explaining that those metals represent various kingdoms that would arise sequentially over the centuries. When he got to the giant stone that crushed them all, he said:



***And in the days of these kings (the nations of modern Europe) the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.***

*Daniel 2:44*

What happens to the nations of this world, to this world itself, at least as we know it? It's eradicated. It becomes as chaff, dust, carried away by wind so that *no trace of them was found*.

How much more explicit could the Bible be? When Jesus returns, nothing of this world as we know it remains.

## TAKEN AWAY

This kind of imagery appears all through the Bible. Jesus Himself compares His Second Coming to the flood which destroyed the world.



***But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.... the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.***

*Matthew 24:37-39*

Notice the language here. Those who didn't get in the ark with Noah were those whom the flood *took ... away*. That is, they were destroyed, killed, not taken quietly away to heaven while everyone else is left behind. They perished, and the earth was left desolate.

## UPWARDLY MOBILE

The Second Coming is, then, a one-time-never-to-be-repeated event, an event that cannot be mistaken for anything else, a supernatural event that in its own way will reveal just how narrow, small, and limited all human rationality and science is.

At the Second Coming, the dead in Christ will be resurrected out of the ground - or wherever their dust remains - and taken with Christ to heaven.



***For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.***

*1 Thessalonians 4:16-17*

Talking about the same event the Bible says:



***Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption,***

***and this mortal must put on immortality.***

*1 Corinthians 15: 51-53*

This is what the Bible, in the book of Revelation, calls the first resurrection.



***Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.***

*Revelation 20:6*

## THE MILLENNIUM

A thousand years? What is that all about?

This *thousand years* is the biblical term for what has been called the *Millennium*. And, according to the verses we have looked at so far, the Millennium begins with the resurrection of the dead at the Second Coming, when they are given *immortality*, and then taken to heaven along with those who are alive when Christ returns. There they shall be *priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years*.

This is the fulfilment of one of the greatest promises given to all who believe in Jesus, the fulfilment of our great hope in the search for eternity.



***In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.***

*John 14:2-3*

In a very real sense, this is what it is all about. Without this wonderful promise, we have nothing - with it, we have everything we could ever imagine or desire. This is a promise, a hope - a promise and hope guaranteed by Christ's death - that the world, and all that's in it, can never offer us - never!

## THE EARTH DURING THE MILLENNIUM

We have seen that when Jesus returns, the dead in Him - believers who have died - are resurrected. Then, with those believers who are alive when He returns, they are all given immortality and are taken to heaven. There they will reign with Christ for a thousand years - the Millennium.

The Millennium, however, isn't such great news for those who choose to be lost - to those who reject Christ and His ways. When Jesus returns, as we saw, the lost perish and the earth is left desolate, as after the flood. In another place, Jesus even compares what happens when He returns to the destruction of Sodom.



***Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.***

*Luke 17:28-30*

Either the flood or Sodom, the results are the same: The lost, having rejected the gift of salvation, perish, and the earth remains desolate, all of which was predicted by the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah.



***I beheld the earth, and indeed it was without form, and void; and the heavens, they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and indeed they trembled, and all the hills moved back and forth. I beheld, and indeed there was no man.***

*Jeremiah 4:23-25*

Jeremiah's use of the terminology *without form and void* comes directly from Genesis 1:2 - a picture of the earth before the Lord created life on it. This verse, then, shows that during the millennium the earth will become as dark, desolate and chaotic as it was before the Lord created life here.

## SATAN BOUND

The book of Revelation gives us the clearest depiction of what happens on earth during the Millennium that begins at Christ's second coming.

Look at the following texts:



***Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished.***

*Revelation 20:1-3*

The Greek word for bottomless pit here is *abussos* - from which we get the word *abyss* - and is the same word found in an ancient Greek translation

of the Old Testament for *the deep* in Genesis 1:2 - a depiction of the earth before God created life on it. This language helps show the desolate and lifeless state of the earth when Satan is bound there for these thousand years. This is the same Satan, *the great dragon ... that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world.* Revelation 12:9 Now, though, the texts expressly state that during this time, he will not be able *to deceive the nations ... till the thousand years were finished.* And that's because all the redeemed are in heaven as *priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years,* and everyone else is dead. Meanwhile, for this thousand-year period, Satan is cast into the bottomless pit - this lifeless and desolate *abussos*.

## THE EPIC'S FINAL BATTLE

Revelation 20, where this thousand years is mentioned numerous times, shows that, at least as far as the lost and Satan are concerned, not everything ends with the Second Coming. A final judgment will follow.



***But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. ... Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.***

*Revelation 20:5, 7-9*

Note the flow of events as God has revealed them to us. We have seen that:

When Christ returns, all the redeemed are brought to heaven, where they reign with Christ for a thousand years.

All the wicked are in their graves. Not in hell – just dead.

The earth is desolate and devoid of human life. Satan is bound on the earth for that same thousand years.

Now, at the end of the thousand years there is:

The resurrection of the wicked - the rest - the second resurrection.

Satan is free again to lead those who chose to follow him and his ways.

He gathers these followers from all times and places for a final assault on God's kingdom. God intervenes with final punishment and destruction

At the end of the thousand years, there will be a final judgment on the lost - Booklet 16 *Discover Justice*, gives details.

## NEW CREATION

Revelation then continues on ...



***Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.***

*Revelation 21:1*



***For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.***

*Isaiah 65:17*



***For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make shall remain before Me, says the LORD, so shall your descendants and your name remain.***

*Isaiah 66:22*



***Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.***

*2 Peter 3:13*

In other words, all the wrong in this world as it is now will cease. Everything, as shown in Daniel 2, will be eradicated, and a whole new existence will begin. Best of all, thanks to Jesus, we can be part of this new existence. God's intention is that we all be part of it. The only wildcard is our own choice. Do we choose Him, and the promise of eternal life that He offers us, or do we choose to go our own way?

No question, if the past is prologue, then the future is bleak. The great news for each of us, however, is that the past is not prologue; it is anything but prologue. The future is not going to be anything like the past, and we can thank God for that too, the God who says to us:



***For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.***

*Jeremiah 29:11*

*And they lived happily ever after.* Do you ever wonder why this popular expression is so often the final thought, even in children's stories? Because *eternity* is etched into the very fabric of our psyche. We want the story to end well. We want our story to end well. We long for that place and time where the trauma and problems of this life will be no more.

This epic in which we find ourselves - this great controversy - will end where all we have longed for will be reality. It's what we really want.

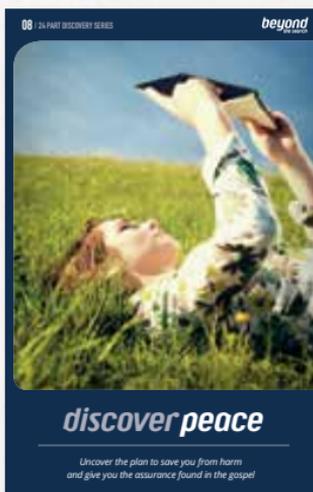
This is not a bedtime story - this is reality. All God's prophecies in the past have been fulfilled just as He said. We can trust Him with our future too.







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