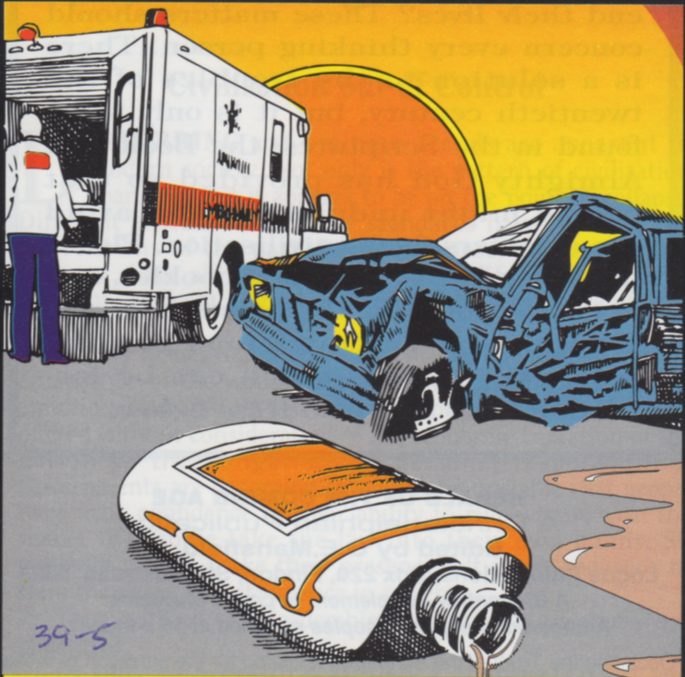


OUR SICK SOCIETY

SOCIETY

FULFILLS BIBLE PROPHECY



• **To be Changed by Christ** •

THERE is an urgent need for people to consider the important message in this booklet. It draws attention to the great problems facing a society that is rapidly destroying itself. It answers the questions: Why is there so much wickedness and sin? Why are the divorce courts filled, and marriages being destroyed? Why are young people contemplating ways to end their lives? These matters should concern every thinking person. There is a solution to the troubles of the twentieth century, but it is only to be found in the Scriptures: the Book that Almighty God has provided so that people might understand and avoid the disasters facing civilisation. Please take the time to read this booklet, and to deeply consider the points it raises. We welcome any questions or comments thereupon, which can be forwarded to us at the address below.

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Our Sick Society

FULFILLS PROPHECY

*To Be Changed by Christ
at his Coming*

Civilisation out of Control

DISTURBING and ominous trends are apparent in modern society. Not only is the pattern of civilisation changing, but it appears to be on the point of collapse. Different attitudes and lower standards have replaced the conventions of the past. Permissiveness, perversion and violence, have almost become a way of life. The virtues of restraint, modesty, respect and concern for others are of little regard.

Society insists that individual demands be satisfied, but the emergence of the welfare state has weakened initiative and ambition. Many people take advantage of the perks and benefits offered without consideration of the economic condition of the nation or the obligations of personal responsibility. Governments are becoming so politically unstable that people have little confidence in their ability to rule wisely, with the result that some take the law into their own hands. So vigilante groups make their presence felt in an endeavor to stem the rising tide of violence in society.

Thus, without true leadership civilisation is effectively out of control.

In spite of prevailing affluence, dissatisfaction and discontent are rife, leading to aimlessness and hopelessness. Many become tired of life, and seek to end it in violence. A suicide occurs every few minutes in the USA. In 1991,

Australia recorded as many suicides as road fatalities.

These trends show how incurably sick modern society has become in this age of conflict and frustration. Youth seethes with unrest, dissatisfied with the world it has inherited, and manifests increasing impatience with any form of restraint.

What is to be the outcome of today's corrupted, sick, civilisation? What kind of a world is being moulded for future generations? What can one do to escape the calamity that threatens? Who has the solution to these enormous problems?

The Bible Has the Answer

We submit that the Bible supplies the only positive answer to these questions. Its pages reveal the significance of the present times, and God's ultimate destiny for the world.

Unfortunately, in this materialistic age, it has become unfashionable to consider or to heed the teaching of this much forgotten, and misunderstood book. Many people regard the Bible to be completely out of touch with reality, and those who try to live in accordance with its requirements are often despised and ridiculed.

But the Bible is not out of date. On the contrary, its prophecies are clear and certain, and the hope that it sets forth is practical and well adapted to the needs of humanity. Such developments as the modern revival of Israel, the restructuring of Russian power, the divided state of the nations, and the deteriorating trends of society, are clearly predicted in its pages.

Imminent Changes in Society Predicted

The Bible teaches that even greater changes in the earth are soon to occur. It reveals that Jesus Christ is about to appear with the divine answer to the problems of the present. He will establish a political kingdom on earth, and bring about vast economical, social and religious changes.

The return of Jesus Christ to the earth, was the angelic message delivered to disciples gathered on the Mount of Olives when the Lord ascended from earth, 2000 years ago: ***"This same Jesus, which is taken up from you (apostles) into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven"*** (Acts 1:11). Later these men publicly declared: ***"times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ... whom the heaven***

must receive until the times of restitution (restoration) of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:19-21).

The purpose of his coming is to restore a true and proper government, with wise, helpful policies: **“The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever”** (Daniel 2:44). **“The Lord shall be king over all the earth”** (Zechariah 14:9). **“Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more”** (Isaiah 2:3-4).

These Scriptures speak of the personal, visible return of the Lord to the earth, in order to establish his throne in Jerusalem and to reign over all mankind.

But though this is ultimately to be earth's glorious destiny, it will only be achieved after a time of judgment and destruction which mankind will bring upon itself. The Bible shows that the very trends and conditions being suffered by society at this present time, shall erupt into **“a time of trouble”** unprecedented in modern history, from which this world will only be saved by divine intervention (Daniel 12:1). Of such a period of trouble the Lord Jesus warned that there will come **“upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity (literally ‘no way out’)... men's hearts failing them for fear...”** and afterwards **“shall they see the Son of Man coming... with power and great glory”** (Luke 21:26-27).

When Will This Occur?

In predicting the future, the Lord Jesus Christ drew upon the examples and experiences of two men: Noah and Lot.

Both lived in times of crisis which culminated in widespread disaster; but both escaped the destruction by means provided by God.

The Lord declared: **“As it was in the DAYS OF NOAH, so shall it be also in the days of the (coming of the) Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into**

the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the DAYS OF LOT, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:26-30).

It is significant that the Lord referred to the "**days**" (plural), of the Son of Man, rather than to a single "day". In that he spoke of two similar epochs, which would both see the destruction of society after a period of ungodly materialism and widespread wickedness. His warnings first applied to the horrendous overthrow of the Jewish society in AD70 when the Roman armies came against the city of Jerusalem. That "day" foreshadowed another crisis that would involve Gentile society.

As the Jewish nation was then engulfed in judgment so will the Gentile society which manifests similar opposition to God's way — exactly as is seen in current events (cp. Jeremiah 25:29).

The same materialistic outlook is witnessed today, with the sad decline of homelife, the same upsurge of crime and violence, the same threat of widespread pollution, the same deterioration of morals, as preceded the flood of Noah's day.

Worse: not only has society degenerated in the areas of violence and self-gratification, as was seen in the days of Noah, but there has emerged the depravity of homosexuality and deviant practices as was experienced in the days of Lot. Because this perversion had become so common in the city of Sodom its name was taken to describe the evil: **Sodomy**. In modern terms the plague of Aids is directly traceable to this cause.

Does not this illustrate the truth of the Lord's words "**As it was in the days of Lot...**"?

The days of Noah and of Lot were also noted for divine intervention and judgment because of the unrepentant wickedness of the masses. They culminated in cataclysmic crises, which overthrew existing conditions, in order to make way for a new order.

The warning of Christ, therefore, signifies that the present age is approaching a crisis which shall overwhelm the world in

judgment as it did in the past.

But do our modern conditions identify with those of the days of Noah and of Lot?

An Age of Easy Divorce

There are remarkable similarities between the society of today and that in the days of Noah. Consider the examples to which the Lord Jesus drew attention: ***“they did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage”*** (Luke 17:27). In these words the Master described social conditions prior to the flood. It was a time of relaxed affluence, gross materialism, and easy marriage, with little concern given to the sensible old-time moral principles of responsible courtship.

“Marrying and giving in marriage” (Matthew 24:38) describes a promiscuity incidental to this age. There is no doubt that there is, today, a greater breakdown in family attitudes, and an abnormal increase in divorce, than ever before. Divorce is made easy. Many do not even worry to enter into a formal state of matrimony. Extramarital relations are common, and are accepted by a generation that no longer recognises the right of God to establish principles of right and wrong. Every form of perversion is publicised, and lust shows no restraint. And this state of things is tolerated by a society that is sick through sin, but seeks to solve its moral problems through pills and contraceptives which encourage promiscuity, and are interpreted by many young people as justifying sexual indulgence. So the standards of the world decline, hastening toward a judgment predicted in the Bible.

Meanwhile the scars of unhappiness, frustration, and appalling illnesses terminating in a hopeless death, form the heritage that modern society leaves to its offspring. By the majority chastity and virginity are no longer treasured — and the real rewards of virtue are mostly ignored.

In the USA, over one million divorces were granted in 1990; and a Government survey has estimated that more than one third of all firstborn children are conceived out of wedlock.

Australia is no better. In a population of just over 17 million, over 45,630 divorces were granted in 1991. Over half of the divorces affected children, who were thereby emotionally scarred through the experience. A broken home

has an inevitable psychological effect upon the whole family. It induces a feeling of insecurity, and breeds a spirit of unrest and revolt that in turn is transmitted to society. When the family unit disintegrates, juvenile delinquency increases. The Bible predicts this, and the conditions of humanity today reveal it. Paul declared: ***"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents..."*** (2Timothy 3:1-2).

The aimless, restless, wandering of young people as they roam the streets in search of excitement, the decline of home life, the disintegrating family units, the frustrating search for satisfaction, drug addiction, the violence and crime that accompanies such conditions, testify to the truth of the Bible predictions concerning today's society.

Certainly they witness that these days are comparable to those of Noah, and thereby give reality to the prophecies of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What future is there to a nation whose young people despise authority, ridicule family loyalty and love, seek excitement in drugs, vicious muggings, moral licence — while repudiating every form of discipline or restraint? Only one of increasing violence, anarchy, evil, leading to complete disruption.

An Age Of Violence and Crime

In the days of Noah, the earth was corrupt and ***"filled with violence"*** (Genesis 6:13). Widespread violence is a phenomena of modern life. Vicious murders, shootings and rape have increased out of all proportion. Since 1960, the USA has recorded an increase in serious crime of 148% while its population has increased by only 13%!

Other nations have kept pace with the US in this terrible record. Consider the bombings, shootings, violence, terrorism recorded throughout the world today from Ireland to Israel; from Africa to Australia. It is an age of absolute lawlessness, and its fruits are seen in every strata of the community. It has even invaded the schools and colleges. Students have resorted to violence, have beaten up their instructors, held officials in hostage, given themselves over to rioting, and wanton destruction.

For example, research undertaken by the *Australian Institute of Criminology (Trends and Issues, July 1987)* established that the cost of vandalism on State Rail trains in NSW in 1984/85 cost almost \$5 million, and in South Australia, figures released by the State Rail Authority (*Southern Times Messenger, 30.9.92*) stated that the cost was \$1.2 million in the previous year. It cost an additional \$2.4 million in measures to curtail its growth. Probably the most alarming feature is the growth in juvenile crime. Crimes committed by younger offenders are abnormally increasing. In South Australia the number of juvenile offenders apprehended from 1981 to 1991 increased by almost 60%. Approximately half of the total offences committed for "Breaking and Entering", Larceny, Property Damage, Drug Use and Possession in 1991 were committed by youths under 18 years of age.

Perhaps these young people react to the environment or industrial unrest, ruthless demands, threats and violence in which they live. Never before, in recorded history, has there been such shooting, bombing, and murdering of innocent people as today. Indeed, in an age of inflation and rapidly spiralling costs, human life remains the cheapest, most easily expendable commodity. The daily slaughter on the roads through irresponsible, selfish, drunken or drug-crazed driving witnesses to that fact.

What has caused this? One avenue is that of modern entertainment. Perhaps the greatest excitation to immorality and violence today is the screen and video, where these evils are glamorised thereon in such a way as to encourage viewers to experiment for themselves. It is claimed that sex, sin and violence are being increasingly exploited by movie makers. As young minds concentrate on the theatre screen or TV, the sins there depicted gradually become accepted as a way of life. Forms of restraint are impatiently rejected, and young people experiment with the forms of wickedness or ruthlessness they see dramatised and glamorised on the screen, in order to satisfy their craving for unlawful pleasure.

The record of Scripture concerning the days of Noah states that: ***"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his***

heart was only evil continually, and it grieved Him..." (Genesis 6:5-6).

One researcher claims: "What must be the reaction of God now, as He views our world rejecting His mercy and truth, and reflecting this image of the past?"

In Noah's day, God cleansed the earth by a flood of unprecedented extent and power; in the impending future, He will purge it with the fire of divine judgment, that He might reform it in righteousness under the control of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God has not abdicated His authority. He is not "dead," as some blasphemously allege, but will, at the proper time, move against the godless society of today.

Meanwhile, for right-minded people, this is a day of opportunity, similar to that which was extended to people in Noah's day before the flood. They were offered repentance. The record states: "**Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord**", for he "**walked with God**" (Genesis 6:8-9).

In an environment of gross evil, blasphemy and wickedness, Noah sought a better, higher way of life, and found a real joy and satisfaction that eluded his contemporaries.

Pollution and Population

The Bible further states that "in the days of Noah", "**God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt**" (Genesis 6:12).

Man had polluted the earth as he is busily doing today. In this age, selfish greed has resulted in the pollution of land, sea and air alike. Man has created problems of living that he cannot control. Cities are gradually becoming uninhabitable, land unproductive, water a cesspool of death.

The *National Centre for Air Pollution Control (USA)* claimed in 1965 that there were 129 million tons of air pollutants rising into the air and that this was increasing each year. The result is a poisonous atmosphere. Some years back, the village of Knapsack, in Europe, was officially declared unfit for human habitation because of air pollution. Today, every major city has its dark cloud of poisonous smog, and every year it becomes more heavy and menacing.

The ecology of nature is thrown out of balance. Whilst man has devised pesticides which have sharply improved farm

crops, they have also caused spectacular kills of fish and wildlife, thus upsetting the balance of nature. Fish are dying as the result of pesticides being washed into streams and oceans. Complete species of wildlife are slowly being exterminated. Because of pollutants relentlessly poured into its waters, the Mediterranean Sea is becoming sterile.

At the same time, man's ruthless exploitation of land is threatening production.

Man-made deserts and droughts are increasing year by year. The population of the world is increasing by some 52 million people annually (*UN Demographic Yearbook, 1989*), without adequate compensatory increase in food production. The consequence is that millions of people are on a starvation diet. There is such a state of imbalance in the earth that it is estimated that 10,000 people starve to death every day in the Third World, whilst at the same time, in Western countries, millions of dollars are spent annually in advertising more varieties of pets' foods!

The population of India was 844 million at the 1991 Census, and is increasing at the rate of approximately 16 million every year (an Indian is born every two seconds). Though starvation is rife, it is estimated that by the year 2000, the population will be one billion.

Overcrowding is evident in other areas. The islands of Indonesia are bursting with over 100 million people, whilst in Malaysia, and further north in China, are countless millions more.

These are a few of the facts of the world situation. But the most significant feature is that the Bible predicted that such conditions would exist upon the earth prior to the coming of Christ, and that he, alone, would be competent to deal with it. Revelation 11:18 predicts: ***"The nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that Thou shouldest give reward unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear Thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth"***.

Significantly, the Greek word here translated "destroy" (*diaphtheiro*) signifies to destroy through corruption or pollution!

Thus in a context that predicts the return of Christ, the Bible foretells the possibility of man being able to "destroy the earth". It shows that Bible prophecy anticipated the polluting, corrupting, destructive policies of modern man, and teaches that the return of Christ, and the disciplinary measures he institutes, will alone prevent annihilation.

Nuclear Weaponry and The Arms Race

Add to the moral and physical corruption of the times, the weapons of destruction man has developed, and the crisis is even more serious. Nuclear devices with an explosive force equal to one million tons of TNT, or 60 times the force of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, have been made and tested.

Time magazine (18.2.92) reported that the US and Russian governments are concerned with the number of unemployed nuclear scientists from the former USSR that have been lured to work on nuclear weapons for Iran, Libya and Iraq. Not only are they exporting their deadly skills, but they are understood to be illegally taking computer software and laboratory instruments used in the development and manufacture of the weapons. Mr. W. Richardson, a member of the powerful *US House Intelligence Committee* said: "This is an extremely dangerous situation — more dangerous than terrorists getting their hands on nuclear weapons directly".

The Current Affairs Bulletin (Nov. 1992) says that Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, India and China all have nuclear weapons. An article entitled "*The New Nuclear Arms Race*" states that China has 60 intermediate range ballistic missiles, 8 inter-continental ballistic missiles, and a total arsenal of some 200 weapons. Quoting an authoritative source *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* (1989) states that by 1995 India would theoretically have sufficient material to build a similar number of warheads as would China.

Newsweek (22.9.92) also carried an article on the growth of arms acquisitions in Asia following the collapse of the former USSR. In "*A New Arms Race*" reports of massive arms buying sprees by Asian nations are documented. The tiny island power of Taiwan purchased 150 US F-16 fighters; Singapore and Thailand also obtained supplies of the same aircraft. The impoverished Philippines have signed contracts for Israeli fighters and Czechoslovak light attack aircraft. On the naval

front China is building up its blue-water fleet with long-distance resupply vessels and amphibious assault vessels; Taiwan is adding eight frigates to its fleet; Indonesia has bought 39 vessels that once sailed under the East German flag; whilst Malaysia has bought its first submarines. The article also observed that "countries like Thailand and Malaysia, whose armies were designed largely to put down internal challenges, are re-tooling to handle as yet unforeseen external threats". It concludes by saying that the arms buildup "has an air of extravagance. But an unnecessary weapon is still a lethal one, and the same impulse that led to its purchase could lead, one day, to its use".

As war grows more frequent throughout the world, Third World countries become the testing ground of these new arsenals of destruction.

Christ's coming alone will solve the problems of this polluted globe of conflict and destruction. When he establishes his reign on earth, he will abolish such wasteful occupations as warfare and international hostilities, for: ***"he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more"*** (Isaiah 2:4).

The present evil, unjust and God-denying civilisation will be replaced by a universal kingdom to be established by the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, all people will respond to a new policy of education based upon the law of God. Thus ***"it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem"*** (Isaiah 2:2-3). People will submit to God's wise laws and ways, as they come to appreciate and submit to His will, and learn how to live decently. Although God's way of righteousness is available today in the pages of His inspired Word, ***The Bible***, very few people are prepared to seriously consider its message. It will

require the judgments of God in the earth in order to change the rebellious attitudes of men and women who today refuse the ways of wisdom. The prophet Isaiah declares that although he (like Noah and Lot) desired the goodness and righteousness of God, that was not the general attitude of mankind: ***"With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord"*** (Isaiah 26:9-10). This sad condition of antagonism to God's way will change when Jesus Christ brings his almighty power to bear upon the problem of mankind's sickness.

Willingly Ignorant

The Lord remarked of the society destroyed in the flood of Noah's day, that they ***"knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be"*** (Matthew 24:39).

Though the people "knew not" the approaching judgment, they should have known, for Noah had proclaimed it. However, they refused to hearken or to heed. Scripture declares that they were ***"willingly ignorant"*** (2Peter 3:5). They deliberately set aside the counsel and appeal of God. The apostle Peter declares that ***"the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah"*** (1Peter 3:20), but in vain. In His mercy, God was willing to save that generation if it had hearkened to His appeal. His "delay" in outpouring judgment (a period of 120 years — see Genesis 6:3) was indicative of His grace should any repent and seek the salvation He offered.

This is being repeated today. Despite obvious signs in the world of the need for Christ's coming, people are unheeding of the message of God. To the few who are prepared to hear, Peter reminds his readers that any seeming delay in the divine program to send Jesus Christ is a period of personal opportunity. He wrote: ***"account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation"*** (2Peter 3:15).

But do people take heed? Apart from a small minority, they do not. There is general apathy to God's way, despite the very obvious evidence of the unfolding of His plan and purpose in

the earth. In this there is a further parallel to the great crisis of the past. Consider the experiences of faithful Lot.

Modern Sodom — A Mirror from the Past

In the city of Sodom conditions had deteriorated to such a vicious, immoral and violent state, that when two visitors presented themselves to Lot, and indicated their intention of *"abiding in the street all night"*, he was appalled (Genesis 19:2-3). He was familiar with the immorality of the populace, and the physical dangers to men spending the night in such a depraved and corrupt city in which homosexuality was rife. And similar dangers exist in many modern cities today.

The faithful Lot found a sharp deterioration of conditions in Sodom since his arrival in that shameless, sinful city. We read that he was *"vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked"* (2Peter 2:7), and was distraught by the evil environment around him.

Does not that describe conditions of today? The ever increasing obscenity of screen and television entertainment; the crudeness, violence and immorality that is brought into homes by a corrupt video industry before the eyes of impressionable young people. How often has the sorry statement been made that a young person was incited to violence, or to lust, by "seeing and hearing" these things on television, video or movie screen!

Consider the "literature" handed to young children as part of their education. A few years ago, the publishers of some books would have been prosecuted for obscenity, and the books banned as pornographic. Today, children are encouraged to read such works, and sometimes taught the meaning of the obscene words which are found therein. Videos shown in schools frankly describe in detail sexual acts. No wonder moralists state that virginity among young unmarried women is becoming the exception rather than the rule. Young girls are encouraged by some teachers to use the "pill", and to experiment with sex so as to prevent any inhibitions.

Never before has sex been exploited as today; never before has so much been published and broadcast concerning it; and never before has the moral state of society been in such a condition of abject bankruptcy!

Take, for example, the sudden unparalleled growth of

homosexuality in modern society. Obviously, the latent, evil inclinations in human beings are aroused and stirred into activity by permissiveness, the result of people talking and thinking upon the subject, so that they finally decide to experiment. As a result, in many parts of the world, homosexuality is legalised, as it was in Sodom (Genesis 19:4-5; Romans 1:18-31).

Lot's visitors soon had evidence of the vile criminality of the city. When the men of Sodom learned of their presence there, they endeavoured to force their attention upon them in homosexual acts of violence (Genesis 19:4-5).

These nefarious practices are becoming common in modern society, and will continue to do so, until the Lord's return. For he declared: "***As it was in the days of Lot... thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed***" (Luke 17:28-30).

Christ's warning words have had terrible, literal fulfilment. But though, like Lot, we may be "vexed" by all we see and hear of these things, we can have the consolation of knowing that an end to them has been decreed. Christ's reign on earth will replace wickedness with righteousness.

Sodom's sin was not merely immorality, but the careless attitude of the people towards its grossest conduct.

It was committed without shame or any attempt to hide it. Indeed, rewards were given to those who invented new methods of perversion: "***The shew of their countenance doth witness against them, and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto them for they have rewarded evil***" (Isaiah 3:9).

Perversion became the normal way of life in Sodom. The people openly supported the wicked and condemned such as Lot who raised his voice against the prevailing wickedness (Genesis 19:9). A philosophy was proclaimed declaring that discipline caused dangerous inhibitions. Consequently expression was given to every form of licence: "***They commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness***" (Jeremiah 23:14). This pursuit of evil was made possible by the prevailing affluence. Working hours were reduced, food and money were plentiful, the people wanted for nothing. They saw

no need of God. They manifested "pride", induced by "**fulness of bread and abundance of idleness**" (Ezekiel 16:49).

The situation in ancient Sodom declined beyond reform. The only alternative was to urge individuals such as Lot to separate themselves from the ungodly city, and then to destroy it. To do otherwise would have permitted its polluting influence to spread to other centres.

Lot was told to warn his relations of the coming destruction. He did so, but to them his words made no impression. "**He seemed as one that mocked**" (Genesis 19:14).

What of today? People generally mock at the idea of Christ's coming, and at the warning of divine judgment upon a guilty and rebellious generation. They ridicule the teaching of the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth.

But in doing so, they fulfil Bible prophecy. Hear the warning of Scripture: "**Know this, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?**" (2Peter 3:4). These scoffers are happy to continue with life the way it is, and therefore do not want Christ's coming and the necessary discipline he will assert.

Faith or Folly? Water or Fire?

It is significant that the days of Noah and Lot should have been selected by Christ to illustrate conditions in the earth prior to his second coming, because of the way in which each reacted to the challenge of those times. Noah's faith resulted in him saving both himself and his family; Lot's folly in becoming involved in the evil city of Sodom destroyed his family, and almost brought about his own death.

The pattern of divine judgment used on the two occasions of crisis are also significant. The world of Noah's day was devastated by water; the city of Lot's day was destroyed by fire.

But the water that overwhelmed the world in the days of Noah also saved him, so that the Bible declares: "**eight souls were saved by water**" (1Peter 3:20). Noah built an ark for the salvation of himself and his family, and the water lifted that vessel above the destruction underneath. The apostle Peter comments: "**The like figure, even baptism, doth also now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God**" (1Peter 3:21).

What if fire had been used by God in the days of Noah? The ark then would not have saved him. The water of Noah's day is typical of the water of baptism; the fire of Lot's day foreshadows the coming absolute destruction on the present evil, rebellious, godless generation. Christ commissioned his disciples to preach to the people their need of the first that they might escape the second. He declared: ***"Go into all the world and preach the gospel; he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"*** (Mark 16:16).

Today there is an urgent need to heed that message. The gospel sets forth the hope of life eternal upon the earth at Christ's coming; belief in the teachings of the Bible and baptism by immersion in water are the divinely appointed means by which one can attain unto it.

This is the way to avoid the impending judgments that will pour out upon a guilty world, and provide for the joy of the future. The glory that God destines for the earth will far outweigh all the sacrifices and disciplines that the true believer is called upon to undergo in preparation for the promise of the future. The Bible offers the hope of immortality, of glory and honor to sincere men and women who are prepared to act as did Noah and Lot, separating themselves from the attitudes and practices of the godless society of their times, devoting themselves to the ways of righteousness and wisdom.

It is to such people that this booklet is dedicated. We urge the reader to take up this matter. We are happy to supply further free literature that will outline the facts concerning Christ's coming, and the wonderful picture of the kingdom that he will soon establish.

Let good, common sense determine your future. Let the Bible provide you with that insight. Then, the reader can rest confident in the assurance that God will overshadow his or her life and effect a wonderful salvation from this present sick society.

Questions and comments are invited, which should be addressed to **The Editor, Herald of the Coming Age, Box 220, Findon, South Australia 5023**. Further free literature is available on request.

THE FUTURE OF CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS

RAPTURED INTO HEAVEN, OR
GATHERED TOGETHER ON EARTH?



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