

**THE FUTURE OUTLOOK**

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**America--The Land of Bellyachers**

By Ricardo Raffles

I never have seen a nation of cry babies as we have in America, or even in Greensboro for that matter; Cry, cry, cry, that's all I hear all day long. We belly ache because we don't have a new car like our neighbor. We're jealous because we don't live in a palace like the Cones or Prices. They're crying the blues because they must pay too much taxes on the extra millions of profits they made in sixty-eight. Every time Uncle Sam takes an extra bite from our take home check, you can hear a howl from here to China and back.

Look what I got from that cheapskate for Christmas, a lousy necktie; or I slave all day in the kitchen and wash and iron and take care of the babies and what's my husband giving me? A stinking pair of nylons; Gripe, gripe, gripe! Honey, I've had this dress for ten months; Mommy! Bobby got a new pair of tassel loafers and I ain't going to school unless I get a pair also; Helen, let's go over to the Jones for Christmas, they got a new color T.V. and I don't want to watch this old last year black and white model.

Talk about jealousy, envy, green eyes of coveting! If it ain't one thing it's another. Why the poorest American in these United States is the richest man or woman or child in this whole wide world. So you only got a little old shack you rent. So you only live in a fifteen thousand home and a second mortgage on it. Maybe you have a 1965 jalopy you're driving around. So what? You are wearing last year's suit or dress. Maybe you're not eating steak three times a week. Maybe you don't take a Caribbean cruise like some millionaires I know in Greensboro. I say Americans, Greensboroans, wise up baby! Stop your belly achin', stop your cryin' the blues. 'Bout time you count a few blessings. Let's go on the other side of the track for a week or so. Let's take a look around a little at some of our Neighbors. Open your eyes, open your ears, get a nice smell, eat a little, sleep a little, live a little, in the areas and sections of the world and I'll guarantee you'll never belly ache or be a chronic complainer again.

As we leave America and head down into Mexico, Central America, Panama, South America, this is how eighty percent of you would live. Your diet would be mostly rice, fried flour, fried bananas, a fried or roasted lizard or wild boar once in a while. You would live in a thatched one room hut, eat off makeshift flimsy tables made from the limbs and boughs of trees. When you went to bed, you would sleep on a sort of a lean-to hammock or shaky thatch bed, while sleeping, you took the chance of being bit by scorpions, snakes, tarantulas, mosquitos loaded with the malaria bug. Then your days if you wake up in the morning, were spent by a little farming on a little piece of jungle clearing, raising a little corn or sugar cane. Then the rest of the day would be spent loafing. No shows, no televisions, no supermarkets to browse around in. Oh yes! No shoe stores either, for these people in the jungles don't need any shoes. In fact most of them never wore a shoe their whole thirty or forty years of living. They also wouldn't have any use for a super market, because they were unemployed and since they had no job, they had no paycheck and therefore they didn't need a supermarket to shop in.

They could read books; Oh I forget! They have no schools, so no schools, no books. So since these natives of the jungles are so broke, so illiterate, it wouldn't pay for a big beautiful church to be built there to teach them of the Good Old Gospel would it preacher? Then let's take a quick hop over into Africa, around the Sahara Desert area. Not much to see, only a few thousand camels, a bunch of old raggedy tents and a million or more so of Nomads. Let's not worry about them, they're used to the desert and sun, after these last three thousand years or so. Ah yes, let's go through the Congo, Nigeria, Uganda, Malawi. But let's go real fast, you see there is thousands dying from starvation daily. There's a lotta leprosy and sleeping sickness, so we better head on down to Rhodesia and Union of South Africa.

My, look at all those big black Africans, thousands of them going into the gold mines and diamond mines. I hear they only get a dollar and ninety cents a day for ten

**This Week's Sunday School Lesson****5. THE KINGDOM SHALL COME****What Is Our Concern?**

In June, 1967, the Middle East erupted into a short but savage war between the Jews and the Arabs. During the brief conflict Israel routed her ancient Egyptian and Syrian enemies and recovered the old city of Jerusalem formerly held by Jordan. Places holy to three religions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — are located in old Jerusalem.

Some Christians who interpret the Bible literally and await an imminent Second Coming of the Lord were as enthusiastic about the war as the nationalistic Jews. These Christians claimed it was a sign that God's consummation of human history was close.

Eminent Jewish rabbis in Jerusalem and elsewhere suggested that the obvious purpose in Israel's victory was the rebuilding of the Temple in the old city and the resumption of sacrifices.

Christians believe that Jesus' sacrifice of himself for the sins of mankind has made the Temple with its sin offerings unnecessary. (See Hebrews 10.) Probably many modern Jews, accustomed to worshiping in synagogues, would not like to return to sacrificing animals. Can we think of Israel's victory as God's action in history? If so, in what way? How should we regard the injustices suffered by the Arab refugees?

How can we think of any event (especially one as complex as war) as God's action in history? How does God's power to make all things new disclose itself in action?

**Before You Read the Scripture**

The prophet-poet continued to describe what the end of time would be like. It is a puzzling series of visions in that it presents events (such as Armageddon and the millennium) that we cannot completely understand. Yet the visions have a forceful intensity because, beneath their obscure symbolism, we can understand their essential message.

The martyrs' songs are followed by the author's depiction of the fall of Rome. (18:21b-24) Armageddon, the final combat between Christ and his forces (the martyrs and angels) and the hosts of Satan, occurs in all its intensity. (16:14, 16; 19:11-21) During the millennium Christ rules his people with justice and peace. (20:1-6) Af-

terward, Satan's forces are utterly defeated, and Satan himself is condemned to eternal torment. (20:7-10)

The Last Judgment finds sinners brought before God to account for their transgressions. It is too late for excuses, and all are judged according to how they have lived, apparently with condemnation for the wicked. (20:11-15) However, a later passage suggests a universal salvation.

After God overcomes all opposition to his righteous rule, he fashions a new heaven and a new earth for redeemed humanity. His mighty struggle to reclaim his creation has been accomplished. Now he establishes his Kingdom, beyond the sphere of human history, for himself and his people. (21:1-4)

The wicked have been punished and the faithful rewarded. God's ability to make earthly powers subject to and servants of his glory has overcome the destructive forces of sin and death. His purposes have been fulfilled and his people glorified through him. Truly he has made all things new.

What the Scripture Says

The Scripture for today is Revelation 21 and 22. Selected verses are printed below. See Home Bible Study suggestions in the back of the quarterly. Revelation 21:3-7, 22-27

3 And I heard a great voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them; and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; 4 he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away."

5 And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6 And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water without price from the fountain of the water of life. 7 He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son."

22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the

hours. I also hear that they are not allowed to go into the city where the white people are, without a passport. Something they call apartheid. Man, let's get out of this country. Let's take a run over to India, Bombay or Calcutta. Look at the people, millions and millions of them. Where did they come from? Thousands of them lining the streets, begging for food and money. I understand that they line up almost on top of each other sleeping on the streets at night. I also hear thousands are dying daily from disease and hunger, yet they allow millions of cattle to roam around, supposed to be sacred or something and no one can eat them. I even hear that certain people are not allowed to be touched and must remain untouchable for life because of Caste Systems. Let's get out of here.

China and Russia is real beautiful, but I'm afraid to go there, they might confiscate my camera or money. Or I might say something I shouldn't and they'll throw me in jail! Space won't allow me to go on, but the journey is ended for me. How about you? America ain't a bad place to live in is it? No more belly achin' for me. How about you?

Lamb. 24 By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates shall never be shut by day — and there shall be no night there; 26 they shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 27 But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Revelation 22:17

17 The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let him who hears say, "Come." And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price.

Memory Selection: He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water without price from the fountain of the water of life." —Revelation 21:6

How We Understand the Scripture

The author of Revelation uses four main symbols to describe the new created order brought into being by the Lord. They are the new Jerusalem, the bride of Christ, the title of God, and the royal gifts. (21:2, 6, 24)

Jews anticipated the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the holy city, as a part of the Messiah's triumph when he came to redeem his people. The Greek philosopher, Plato, believed that earthly objects were copies of ideals, or perfect forms, that were in the mind of God. Perhaps these two thought forms were combined in this symbol.

Greek thought certainly had permeated Judaism at the time the Book of Revelation was written. All man's earthly efforts at religion and at true community represented by the earthly Jerusalem now came to fruition in the descent of the heavenly ideal. Thus, this symbol contained elements that appealed to Jews and gentiles alike.

The redeemed Christians' new and eternal dwelling place is personified as the bride of Christ. Earlier the author compared Babylon (or Rome), the fallen city, to a harlot. (17:1-18) The contrast between this symbol for the degenerate city and that for the eternal city of God is as obvious as it is dramatic.

From the midst of the city, God speaks: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." (21:6) Alpha is the first and Omega the last letter of the Greek alphabet. This title means that God is the source and the goal of all reality, all creation. From him we come; to him we return.

In Revelation 21:24 we are told that all the nations and kings of the earth shall bring their accomplishments as gifts to the kingdom city. All the nations of men will finally walk by the light of God's living presence.

Some Problems

The first symbol—that of the new Jerusalem—gives rise to a pertinent question about the creation of God's kingdom. Is the heavenly kingdom an entirely new creation beyond his-

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