

CHAPTER 1

The Solution to Pollution



Would you like to live adjacent to a town dump? Would it be fun to fish in a pond whose waters are continually fed by a stream of soapy, detergent-filled waters from a nearby laundry? Would you want to swim in a body of water that has been polluted by raw sewage? Would you enjoy working for eight hours each day in a smoke-filled restaurant? What would you think of spending your whole life breathing the smoggy atmosphere of a densely populated industrial city such as New York or Los Angeles or Tokyo?

Yes, pollution is a problem! Pollution may be defined as an accumulation of any substances—in the air, in the water or on the land—in sufficient concentration to produce an unwanted or harmful effect on man, animals or plants. There are basically three kinds of pollution:

1. **Air Pollution**—caused mainly by auto exhaust, factory smokestacks (industries burning coal and oil), etc.



2. **Water Pollution**—caused mainly by chemical and other wastes from factories, sewage, oil spills (from tankers or from drilling rigs), etc.



3. **Land Pollution**—caused by junk piles, dumps and the excessive litter and rubbish which is inexcusably scattered throughout the land by those who care nothing about preserving the beauty of God's creation. Just take a little walk along the roadside and you will soon conclude that the Litterbug is America's most thriving insect. This creature is known by its trail of beer cans, bottles, cigarette packs, newspapers, paper bags and every conceivable kind of garbage.



Pollution is nothing new. Excavations at the site of the ancient city of Troy indicated that the inhabitants dropped their refuse (trash and garbage) on the floor and let it accumulate until the level rose so high that doors would not open, whereupon the doors were repositioned. The Romans left masses of refuse, garbage and even human corpses in open trenches on the city's outskirts, which historians say contributed to many terrible outbreaks of disease which plagued the city. The Jews had a famous dump outside the city of Jerusalem called "Gehenna." Since fires seemed to burn there continually, the Lord Jesus used this word (translated as "hell") to describe the eternal place of punishment for the wicked (Mark 9:43,45,47).

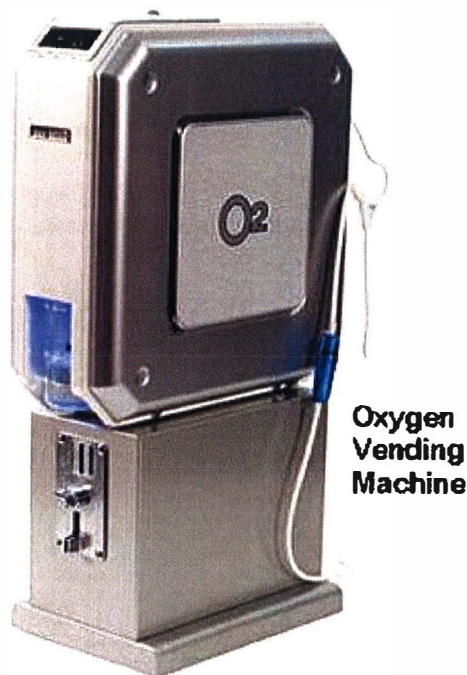
In later years laws were passed to put a stop to smoke pollution. In 1306 a man was executed for burning coal in London. In 1388 the English Parliament forbade dumping filth and garbage in ditches, rivers, and waters, but very few paid any attention to the law. In the Middle Ages people would often throw waste out of windows onto the streets below.

Although there has always been a pollution problem, the greatest threat to man's environment came with the beginning of the Industrial Revolution during the last part of the 18th century. Factories multiplied upon the face of the earth and later the automobile was invented. Mankind is greatly indebted to industry (what would our modern world be like without autos?) but it did carry with it some serious pollution problems.

In the middle of the 19th century water pollution became a serious health problem in certain densely populated areas. Odors arising from the Thames River in the late 1850s are reported to have made life in London almost intolerable. In the 20th century, the automobile became the major air polluter. In October 1948, the small mill town of Donora, Pennsylvania, experienced a four-day fog that made almost half of its 14,000 inhabitants sick due to the polluted air. In the 1950s and 1960s both London and New York had air pollution episodes that resulted in excess deaths and illnesses (see *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1974, "Pollution Control").

On a January day in 1957, Richmond, Virginia, was hit by an unusual plague. Girls walking down the street suddenly discovered that the nylons on their legs literally dissolved and disappeared. There was a high humidity, virtually no wind, and a large amount of sulfur in the air. This unhappy combination made the nylons pop into nothingness! (*Guide to Survival*, by Salem Kirban, p. 53).

In Tokyo, Policemen return regularly to headquarters to breathe oxygen. In this same city there are also vending machines for dispensing oxygen to pedestrians.



**Oxygen
Vending
Machine**

The air pollution in the great cities in America is also quite noticeable. The smoke and smudge over Los Angeles could be seen by astronauts from space. Such pollution has already had certain effects upon the weather, creating even additional problems.

In 2010 there was a huge oil spill on the Gulf of Mexico. It lasted for three months, from April to July. This leak was caused by an explosion on a drilling rig owned by the British Petroleum Company (BP). It is estimated that 53,000 barrels of oil per day escaped from the well before it was finally capped.

People are also concerned about nuclear pollution. In March of 2011 there was a severe earthquake which caused a tsunami (huge tidal wave) resulting in much destruction in certain parts of Japan. Several nuclear reactors were damaged and this resulted in nuclear radiation leaks. Those living near the reactors had to leave their homes and evacuate the area.

It is not surprising that many people are greatly concerned about our environment and they are making every effort to bring pollution under control. In our government there is an agency known as the Environmental Protection Agency which claims to be protecting the environment against the evils of pollution. Men are seeking to **save** the environment and they are seeking to **survive** in the environment.

According to Mark 7:1-5, why did the Pharisees and scribes find fault with the disciples of Christ? _____

_____ These religious Jews were concerned about **polluted hands**, but the Lord Jesus knew that there was another kind of pollution which was far more dangerous and far more deadly.

Read Mark 7:14-23 and whenever you come to the word "defile," substitute the word "pollute" instead. According to Christ (see especially Mark 7:21,23), is the real problem pollution from without (**outer pollution**) or pollution from within (**inner pollution**)?

_____ What kind of pollution should we fear the most?

- a. **Air Pollution**—filthy and unclean air
- b. **Water Pollution**—filthy and unclean water
- c. **Hand Pollution**—filthy and unclean hands
- d. **Heart Pollution**—a filthy and unclean heart (Jeremiah 17:9)

Who is able to solve this greatest pollution problem?

- a. Concerned citizens
- b. The government
- c. The Environmental Protection Agency
- d. Each individual man
- e. The Living God (Ezekiel 36:25-29)

According to Jeremiah 3:2, the land was polluted with:

- a. garbage
- b. litter
- c. factory waste
- d. wickedness

In Ezekiel 14:11 we learn that the people of Israel were **polluted** (defiled, impure, unclean) because of their _____. Therefore, God says that the worst kind of pollution is:

(see Jeremiah 2:22-23)

- a. polluted land
- b. polluted water
- c. polluted air
- d. polluted people

Will any polluted or unclean person be allowed to enter heaven (Ephesians 5:5; compare 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21)? _____ Will God allow any pollution to enter heaven (Revelation 21:27)? _____ How can a polluted sinner get into God's holy heaven (1 Corinthians 6:11)? _____

Even today God tells believers to be careful lest any pollution, filth or garbage should come out of their mouths (Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 3:8)!

The living God is able to **save** and cleanse a polluted person, take him out of his filthy environment (Colossians 1:13; 2 Peter 2:20-"escaped the of the world") and cause him to **survive** in a brand new environment because the believer lives in a new realm, "**in Christ**" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The believer is still in the world but the pollution and filth of the world is no longer in him (John 17:11,16; Philippians 2:15).

It is very important that we understand what the real problem is. Suppose the governments of the world were to discover ways to remove all garbage and waste, cleanse the atmosphere from all its impurities and purify all the earth's waters. Would this solve man's basic problem?

The Bible tells us that Christ shall someday reign on this earth for 1000 years (Revelation 20:4,6). During this time the earth will be filled with

- a. garbage
- b. polluted air
- c. polluted water
- d. the knowledge of God (Habakkuk 2:14; Isaiah 11:9)

How is God's ability to change and cleanse the environment illustrated in the following passages?

1. Exodus 15:23-25 _____
2. 2 Kings 2:19-22 _____
3. 2 Kings 4:38-41 _____
4. Matthew 8:26-27 _____

(Can the God who calmed the seas clean the air as well?)

Yes the Kingdom Age will be a time when the earth will enjoy a perfect environment (even though the tribulation period which precedes the Kingdom Age will experience the worst pollution the world has ever known—see for example Revelation 16:3-4). Yet, at the end of the 1000 years of perfect environment, countless thousands will rise up in wicked rebellion against **the King** (Revelation 20:7-9). Even though these people lived in a pollution free world, their hearts were filled with filth and thoroughly polluted.

The problem: **Polluted People!**

The solution: **Isaiah 1:16-18**

"Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O LAMB OF GOD, I come, I come."

—Charlotte Elliott

