

## God's Final Message to Men

Ellet J. Waggoner

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In the days of Noah God looked upon the earth in its wickedness and said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years" (Gen. 6.3). Noah preached a final message to the antediluvians. The flood came, and "the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished" (2 Peter 3.6); and those who heeded not the message perished with it.

What of the present world? Can we now expect that God's Spirit will always strive with man? His Word tells us. "The heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Peter 3.7). A final message will therefore precede the coming of that day, —a message of warning, as in the days before the flood.

God has not left the world to speculate upon this subject. That men do speculate and indulge in fanciful conjectures concerning things to come, is not the fault of the Lord, but is due to the fact that men are more ready to trust in their own wisdom than in His. The Word of God has much to say about "the last days." It tells us what the nature of those days will be, what signs will appear in them, and what final efforts will be made by the great enemy of mankind to secure the homage of all men to himself. It is our fault if we do not read it, and be made wise thereby.

The end of human probation will be signaled by the terrible visitation of the "seven last plagues," in which is filled up the wrath of God. (Rev. 15.1). But there is a message sent to save men from the fate of being made to drink "the wine of the wrath of God." In the fourteenth chapter of Revelation we read: "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb, and the smoke of their torment ascends up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receives the mark of his name" (Rev. 14:9-11).

These are words of most solemn and awful import. Noah's message proclaimed a coming flood, which would engulf the unbelievers; but here is threatened the wrath of God "without mixture," "filled up" in the seven last plague. To whom are such words spoken? If they concern us, it is time that we knew the fact and understood by what means we may avoid being worshippers of "the beast and his image," and escape so awful a fate.

Do not say that the message of God cannot be understood. God's words are not idle talk, and He does not send men messages they cannot understand. Do not treat it as a matter of indifference. Consider what will be the result to those who hear this message

and do not heed it. They will drink of the wine of the wrath of God poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation. This settles the question for them, and for us as well. They must understand it. When ignorance means destruction, there is but one path to safety, and that is God's path of wisdom. And we may be sure that when God sends the world such a message as this which warns against the worship of the beast and his image, it will be only willful ignorance that will keep any person from being enlightened by it.

God does not hold men responsible for what they cannot avoid, nor does He send them messages, which they cannot comprehend. But He does not force people to see the truth. There is a willful ignorance, which arises from a heart of unbelief, —from a careless and indifferent attitude toward sacred truth as revealed in the Word of God. Such ignorance is sinful, and avails nothing.

There was much willful ignorance in the days of Noah, but it afforded no protection against the flood. Although Noah preached faithfully, the people “knew not until the flood came, and took them all away” (Matt. 24:39). And Peter tells us that “there shall come in the last days scoffers,” 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. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water; whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished; but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Peter 3:3-7). Such will go into perdition if they continue to be willingly ignorant. When God has spoken, willful ignorance of His Word is a short and sure path to destruction.

It is certain, therefore, that men will not be incapable of understanding that warning that God sends them against the worship of “the beast and his image,” and the reception of his “mark.” It is certain that God, who has made an infinite sacrifice to save men, will not make them drink of the wine of His unmixed wrath without having given them a full opportunity to escape the threatened doom. It is certain that He would not condemn them for not making a right “guess” concerning something, which was at best, but a matter of conjecture, and for not seeing clearly into a misty field of speculation. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25). It is as certain, therefore, as that He will do right, that His Word does not present to men a field of conjecture or speculation at all, but one of positive knowledge.

*It is true, men do speculate about the meaning of God's Word and the application of terms and symbols there used; but such work is as needless as it is vain.* God has provided that men shall understand what He speaks to them, with a wisdom that never fails. He has given His Spirit to be a Divine Teacher, to guide men into all truth, and to show them things to come (John 16:13); and He has left the promise, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally and upbraids not, and it shall be given him” (James 1:5). He who would make the Word of God like the dark sayings of the mystic heathen oracles, must be prepared to prove that the Holy Spirit is not competent to teach men the truth, and that God is either unable or unwilling to give to

the humble, prayerful seeker the wisdom that he needs.

With all confidence, therefore, —not in ourselves, nor in the wisdom of man, but in the wisdom and liberality of God, —we may study this most momentous and solemn message of warning against the worship of “the beast” and his “image,” and the reception of his “mark.” The field of investigation is God’s Word. There is the wisdom of God, which is able to make us “wise unto salvation,” and “thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

All that we need to know is already revealed to us. God’s word to man is not a sealed mystery, but a revelation. The message we are considering is a part of “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass” (Rev. 1:1). If we will treat it as a revelation, we shall find that God has spoken the truth, and that “His servants,” may indeed learn there from things, which must come to pass, and which are of vital interest and concern to all the world.

“Thine own friend, and thy father’s friend, forsake not” (Prov. 27:10).