

Sermon 3 – Noah’s Time and Ours

Text: But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of Heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. Matt.24:36, 37

The prophetic discourse of Matt.24 and 25 was given by our Lord in answer to the inquiry of his disciples, "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Chap.24:3.

Here are two questions; one relating to the destruction of Jerusalem; the other to the second coming of Christ. The text relates to the latter. We solemnly believe that the day and hour, and even the year, of the second advent are purposely hidden. Some of the prophetic periods reach to the time of the end, while others extend still further down very near the end itself, to an event of which we shall speak hereafter, yet none of them reach to the coming of the Son of Man. The prophecies clearly point to the period of the second advent, but do not give the definite time of that event.

But many suppose that the text proves that nothing may be known of the period of the second advent. In this they greatly err, as may be seen from the following reasons:

1. Because our Lord, after stating that the sun should be darkened, and that the moon should not give her light, and that the stars should fall from heaven, gives the following forcible parable, and makes the most distinct application of it to this subject. He says: "Now learn a parable of the fig tree. When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." Verses 32, 33. No language can be more direct. No proof can be more complete. The most daring unbelief will hardly venture to deny these words of the Son of God, and assert that nothing can be known of the period of his second coming.

2. Because our Lord declares that as the days of Noah were, so should also the coming of the Son of Man be. Said God to Noah, "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. The period of the flood was given to the patriarch. And under the direct providence of God he prepared the ark and warned the people. So the fulfilling prophecies and the signs distinctly declare that the second coming of Christ is at the doors, and the solemn message has gone forth.

3. Those who claim that the text proves that nothing may be known of the period of the second advent, make it prove too much for their own unbelief. As recorded by

Mark, the declaration reads: "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."

If the text proves that men will know nothing of the period of the second advent, it also proves that angels will know nothing of it, and also that the Son will know nothing of it, till the event takes place! This position proves too much, therefore proves nothing to the point. Christ will know of the period of his second advent to this world. The holy angels who wait around the throne of Heaven to receive messages relative to the part they act in the salvation of men, will know of the time of this closing event of salvation. And so will the waiting, watching people of God understand.

An old English version of the passage reads, "But that day and hour no man maketh known, neither the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."

This is the correct reading, according to several of the ablest critics of the age. The word know is used in the same sense here that it is by Paul in 1 Cor.2:2: "For I determined not to know [make known] anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." Men will not make known the day and hour, angels will not make it known, neither will the Son; but the Father will make it known.

Says Campbell, "Macknight argues that the term know is here used as a causative, in the Hebrew sense of the conjugation hiphil, that is, to make known. . . . His [Christ's] answer is just equivalent to saying, The Father will make it known when it pleases him; but he has not authorized man, angel, or the Son, to make it known. Just in this sense Paul uses the term know: 1 Cor.2:2: "I came to you making known the testimony of God; for I determined to make known nothing among you but a crucified Christ."

Albert Barnes, in his Notes on the Gospels, says, "Others have said that the verb rendered knoweth means sometimes to make known, or to reveal, and that the passage means, 'that day and hour none maketh known, neither the angels, nor the Son, but the Father.' It is true the word has sometimes that meaning, as 1 Cor.2:2."

The Father will make known the time. He gave the period of the flood to Noah, which well represents the proclamation of the second advent, given in connection with the evidence of the termination of the periods of Daniel, during the great Advent movement of 1840 - 44.

And when the patriarch's work of warning and building was finished, God said to him, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark." "For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights." So when the waiting,

watching, weeping, toiling time shall be finished, and the saints shall all be sealed, and shut in with God, then will the voice of the Father from Heaven make known the definite time.

As we look back to the great Advent movement, to the bitter disappointment in 1844, and to the numerous efforts to adjust the prophetic periods by many of the first-day Adventists since that time, and the numerous disappointments which have followed, we can but feel the force of the words of the prophet:

"Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth? Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord God; I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision. For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel. For I am the Lord; I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged; for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord God." Eze.12:22-25.

Page

56

"I will speak, " saith the Lord, "and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass." The voice of God will be heard from on high in the midst of the awful scenes just preceding the second advent. "And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air, and there came a great voice out of the temple of Heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done." Rev.16:17. See also Joel 3:16; Jer.25:30.

The burden of the prophecy of Ezekiel, quoted above, evidently is time. "The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth." God will make this proverb to cease, by speaking himself. In this way the Father will make known the time.

The present is emphatically the waiting, watching time. It is the especial period of the patience of the saints. In definite time we would find relief from the state of suspense to which our present position subjects us.

The Lord appeals to us thus: "Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch." Mark 13:35-37.

One of the fatal consequences of not watching is distinctly stated in Rev.3:3. "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."

Page

57

The consequence of not watching will be ignorance of the time. What will be the

consequence of watching? The inference is unavoidable, that it will be a knowledge of the time.

In answer to the agonizing prayer of the Son of God, "Father, glorify thy name, " there came a voice from Heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." The disciples understood these words from Heaven, while the people that stood by said it thundered. John 12:27-29. So will the waiting, watching disciples of Christ understand the voice of God when he shall speak from on high. But the unbelieving world will not understand the voice. "The wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand."

In comparing Noah's days, and ours, the Lord continues:

"For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be."

A picture of the present condition of the mass of mankind is here drawn. How dark the features! The people of the last generation will be like that before the flood, while the ark was preparing. Noah preached and warned them of the coming flood, and they mocked. He built the ark, and they scoffed and jeered. He was a preacher of righteousness. His works were calculated to give edge to, and set home to the heart, what he preached. Every righteous sermon, and every blow struck in building the ark, condemned a careless, scoffing world. As the time drew nearer, the people were more careless, more hardened, more bold and impudent, and their condemnation surer. Noah and his family were alone. And could one family know more than all the world? The ark is a matter of ridicule, and Noah is regarded as a willful bigot.

But the Lord calls Noah into the ark. And by the hand of Providence the beasts are led into the ark; and the Lord shuts Noah in. This is regarded at first by the scoffing multitude as something wonderful; but it is soon explained away by the wiser ones, so as to calm their fears, and they breathe easier.

The day of expectation finally arrives. The sun rises as usual, and the heavens are clear. "Now where is old Noah's flood?" is heard from a thousand impious lips. It is a day of unusual feasting and sports. The farmer is caring for his herds and lands, and the mechanic is pursuing his work of building. On this very day some are being joined in marriage. And while all are looking to long years of future prosperity and happiness, suddenly the heavens gather blackness. Fear fills every heart.

The windows of heaven open, and the rain in torrents descends. "The fountains of the great deep are broken up, " and here and there come gushing up rivers of waters. The valleys are fast filling up, and thousands are swept away in death.

Some flee to the highest points of land; but the water fast follows them up. Men bear their wives and children to the mountains, but are obliged to part with them there to drown, while they climb the highest trees. But soon they, too, are covered with water, so that there is not a resting place for Noah's dove. All are still in death. Horrid death! made still more horrible by being in consequence of slighted mercy! But where is Noah? Ah! safe in the ark, borne upon the billow. Safe from the flood; for God "shut him in."

By most people the evidences of the soon coming of Christ are considered insufficient to base faith upon. But mark: the testimony and acts of one man condemned the people destroyed by the flood. The evidences then were sufficient, otherwise the world would not have been condemned. But evidences a hundred times more convincing come pouring in upon us, that the day of the Lord is near, and hasteth greatly. We follow down the numerous prophetic chains of Daniel, and of the Revelation, and we find ourselves in every instance standing just before the day of wrath.

We see the signs spoken of by prophets, by Christ, and in the epistles, fulfilling, or fulfilled. And at the right time, and in the right manner, to fulfill certain prophecies, a solemn message arises in different parts of the world: "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand." Joel 2:1. Wherever we look, we see prophecy fulfilling. While the knowledge of God and the spirit of holiness are departing, spiritual wickedness, like a flood, covers the land.

But these evidences are considered insufficient to rest faith upon. Well, what kind of evidence would the unbelieving have? "When the signs of the end, " says the skeptic, "are fulfilled, they will be so plain that no one can doubt." But if the signs are of such a nature, and are fulfilled in such a manner as to compel all to believe in the coming of Christ, how can it be as it was in the days of Noah?

Men were not then compelled to believe. But eight believing souls were saved, while all the world besides sank in their unbelief beneath the waters of the flood. God has never revealed his truth to man in a manner to compel him to believe. Those who have wished to doubt his word, have found a wide field in which to doubt, and a broad road to 37 perdition. While those who have wished to believe, have ever found everlasting rock on which to rest their faith.

Just before the end, the world will be hardened in sin, and indifferent to the claims of God. Men will be careless about hearing warnings of danger, and blinded by cares, pleasures, and riches. An unbelieving and infidel race will be eating, drinking, marrying, building, planting, and sowing. It is right to eat and drink to sustain nature; but the sin is in excess and gluttony. The marriage covenant is holy; but God's glory is seldom thought of. Building, planting, and sowing, necessary for

convenient shelter, food and clothing, are right; but the world has gone wholly after these things, so that men have no time nor disposition to think of God, Heaven, Christ's coming, and the judgment. This world is their god, and all their energies of body and mind bow down to serve it. And the evil day is put far away.

The faithful watchman who sounds the alarm as he sees destruction coming, is held up before the people from the pulpits of our land, and by the religious press, as a "fanatic, " a "teacher of dangerous heresies;" while in contrast is set forth a long period of peace and prosperity to the church. So the churches are quieted to sleep.

The scoffer continues to scoff, and the mocker mocks on. But their day is coming. Thus saith the prophet of God: "Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt. And they shall be afraid; pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth; they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it." Isa.13:6-9.

Most dreadful day! And is it near? Yes, it hasteth! It hasteth greatly! What a description given by the prophet! Read it, and as you read, try to feel how dreadful will be that day: "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly.

That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy; for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land." Zeph.1:14-18.

Now we hear the "peace and safety" cry from the pulpit, and all the way along down to the grogshop. "Where is the promise of his coming?" is murmured from the impious lips of a thousand last-day scoffers. But the scene will speedily change. "For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, . . . and they shall not escape." The scoffing of the haughty scoffer will soon be turned to wailing and howling.

"The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the

Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low." Isa.2:11, 12. "And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground." Jer.25:33.

The last plagues, in which is filled up the wrath of God, now bottled up in Heaven, waiting for mercy to finish her last pleadings, will be poured out. Unmingled wrath of Jehovah! And not one drop of mercy? Not one! Jesus will lay off his priestly attire, leave the mercy-seat, and put on the garments of vengeance, never more to offer his blood to wash the sinner from his sins. The angels will wipe the last tear shed over sinners, while the mandate resounds through all Heaven, Let them alone.

The groaning, weeping, praying church on earth, who in the last message employs every power to sound everywhere the last note of warning, lest the blood of souls be found in her garments, is now free from her burden of labor. The Holy Spirit has written within them these prophetic words of their soon-expected Lord: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Rev.22:11.

Now the ministers of truth have a message to the people, and gladly speak the words of life. They joyfully toil on, suffer on, and spend their energies in preaching to hearts as hard as steel, hoping that a few may be reached, gathered into the truth, and saved. But then they will have no message. Now their prayers and strong cries go up to Heaven in behalf of sinners. Then they will have no spirit of prayer for them. Now the church says to the sinner, Come; and Jesus stands ready to plead his blood in his behalf, that he may be washed from his sin and live. But then salvation's hour will be passed, and the sinner will be shut up in darkness and black despair.

39 It will be a day of mourning, and lamentation, and famine for hearing the words of the Lord. "I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon the loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it." Amos 8:10-12.

Now, the word of the Lord may be heard; but sinners, in and out of the churches, with few exceptions, do not prize it. Then, it will not be heard; fro the watchmen, set

to watch and sound the alarm of danger, will be called down from their high stations. Now, the word of the Lord is carried to the sinner, and offered without money or price; but he treats it carelessly, or, may be, drives the humble servant of Christ from his door. But then will he go in search of it. "They shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, " but they cannot hear it. "They shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, but shall not find it."

From city to city, from State to State, from one country to another, will they go to find a man commissioned of high Heaven to speak the word of the Lord, but such an one is not to be found. All such will then have finished their high commission. The word of the Lord! The word of the Lord! Where can we hear it? is heard in every land. One general wail - the word of the Lord! goes up to Heaven, but the heavens are brass. Then will the people turn and rend the false shepherds, who deceived them with the cry of "peace and safety." Children will reproach parents for keeping them back from walking in the truth, and parents their children.

The miser now loves his money, and holds it with an iron grasp. But it will be said in that day, "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days." James 5:1-3. Now, silver and gold may be used to God's glory, for the advancement of his cause. But in that day, "they shall cast their silver into the streets, and their gold shall be removed: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord." Eze.7:19.