

MAT-MAR-BON-CHRIST MISSION

PALALIL THARAYIL MATHEWS VILLA, CHEEKANAL, OMALLOOR.P.O, PATHANAMTHITTA,KERALA-689647,INDIA. Phone: 91-8943099431, 7594092514 Email: mathews.palalil@yahoo.co.in



(“Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest.” -Mathew-11:28)

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The sins that called for vengeance upon the antediluvian world, exist to-day. The fear of God is banished from the hearts of men, and his law is treated with indifference and contempt. The intense worldliness of that generation is equaled by that of the generation now living. Said Christ, “As in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah 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” (Math. 24:38,39). God did not condemn the antediluvians for eating and drinking; he had given them the fruits of the earth in great abundance to supply their physical wants. Their sin consisted in taking these gifts without gratitude to the Giver, and debasing themselves by indulging appetite without restraint. It was lawful for them to marry. Marriage was in God’s order; it was one of the first institutions which he established. He gave special directions concerning this ordinance, clothing it with sanctity and beauty; but these directions were forgotten, and marriage was perverted, and made to minister to passion.

A similar condition of things exists now. That which is lawful in itself is carried to excess. Appetite is indulged without restraint. Professed followers of Christ are to-day eating and drinking with the drunken, while their names stand in honored church records. Intemperance benumbs the moral and spiritual powers, and prepares the way for indulgence of the lower passions. Multitudes feel under no obligation to curb their sensual desires, and they become the slaves of lust. Men are living for the pleasures of sense; for this world and this life alone. Extravagance pervades all circles of society. Integrity is sacrificed for luxury and display. They that make haste to be rich pervert justice and oppress the poor; and “slaves and souls of men” are still bought and sold. Fraud and bribery and theft stalk unrebuked in high places and in low. The issues of the press teem with records of murder, - crimes so cold- blooded and causeless that it seems as though every instinct of humanity were blotted out. And these atrocities have become of so common occurrence that they hardly elicit a comment or awaken surprise. The spirit of anarchy is permeating all nations, and the outbreaks that from time to time excite the horror of the world are but indications of the pent-up fires of passion and lawlessness that, having once escaped control, will fill the earth with woe and desolation. The picture which inspiration has given of the antediluvian world, represents too truly the condition to which modern society is fast hastening. Even

now, in the present century, and in professedly Christian people, there are crimes daily perpetrated, as black and terrible as those for which the old-world sinners were destroyed.

Before the flood, God sent Noah to warn the world, that the people might be led to repentance, and thus escape the threatened destruction. As the time of Christ's second appearing draws near, the Lord sends his servants with a warning to the world to prepare for that great event. Multitudes have been living in transgression of God's law, and now he in mercy calls them to obey its sacred precepts. All who will put away their sins by repentance toward God and faith in Christ, are offered pardon. But many feel that it requires too great a sacrifice to put away sin. Because their life does not harmonize with the pure principles of God's moral government, they reject his warnings, and deny the authority of his law.

Of the vast population of the earth before the flood, only eight souls believed and obeyed God's word through Noah. For a hundred and twenty years the preacher of righteousness warned the world of the coming destruction; but his message was rejected and despised. So it will be now. Before the Law-giver shall come to punish the disobedient, transgressors are warned to repent, and return to their allegiance; but with the majority these warnings will be in vain. Says the apostle Peter, "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning" (2Peter 3:3,4). Do we not hear these very words repeated, not merely by the openly ungodly, but by many who occupy the pulpits of our land? "There is no cause for alarm," they cry. "Before Christ shall come, all the world is to be converted, and righteousness is to reign for a thousand years. Peace, peace! all things continue as they were from the beginning. Let none be disturbed by the exciting message of these alarmists." But this doctrine of the millennium does not harmonize with the teachings of Christ and his apostles. Jesus asked the significant question, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). And, as we have seen, he declares that the state of the world will be as in the days of Noah. Paul warns us that we may look for wickedness to increase as the end draws near: "The spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Tim. 4:1). The apostle says that "in the last days perilous times shall come" (2 Tim. 3:1). And he gives a startling list of sins that will be found among those who have a form of godliness.

As the time of their probation was closing, the antediluvians gave themselves up to exciting amusements and festivities. Those who possessed influence and power were bent on keeping the minds of the people engrossed with mirth and pleasure, lest any should be impressed by the last solemn warning. When great and wise men had proved to their satisfaction that it was impossible for the world to be destroyed by water, when the fears of the people were quieted, when all regarded Noah's prophecy as a delusion, and looked upon him as a fanatic, - then it was that God's time had come. "The fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened," (Gen. 7:11) and the scoffers were overwhelmed in the waters of the flood. With all their boasted philosophy, men found too late that their wisdom was foolishness, that the Lawgiver is greater than the laws of nature, and that Omnipotence is at no loss for means to accomplish his purposes. "As it was in the days of Noah," "even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17 :26,30). "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). When the reasoning of philosophy has banished the fear of God's judgments; when religious teachers are pointing forward to long ages of peace and prosperity, and the world are absorbed in their rounds of business and pleasure, planting and building, feasting and merry-making, rejecting God's warnings and mocking his messengers, - then it is that sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape. (1Thess.5:3)